Cultural Production and Identity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Madras, India

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ABSTRACT

All cultural production is a consequence of its context and is infused with meaning and identity. A preoccupation with the visual and symbolic aspects of architectural form and its cultural meaning has led to an increased autonomy of the architectural object. This thesis posits that architectural forms do not have fixed, unchanging and singular meanings, but that they acquire meaning in particular contexts— historical, social, cultural and political. Certain forms or stylistic motifs, acquire, embody or are perceived to represent the identity of a nation or cultural groups within a nation. The confluence of a search for 'Indianness' and the post-modern thought in architecture is a paradoxical aspect of the recognition of the autonomy of architecture.

In the contemporary India, the search for a 'Tamil' identity, may be perceived as an attempt to create a distinct, regional identity as opposed to the homogenous and universal national identity. This is similar to the creation of a 'British-Indian' identity as opposed to the western one, by the British, in the last quarter of the 19th century. In this attempt to create a regional identity, the same or similar regional architectural forms and stylistic motifs were the source and precedent to represent both 'Tamil' and 'British-Indian' identity. This would imply that the forms do not have a singular meaning but that they are embodied with meaning and symbolism in particular contexts. This is exemplified by a trans-historical comparison between two colonial and contemporary buildings in Madras, South India. The Post and Telegraph Office, 1875-84 (Architect: Robert Chisholm) and the Law Court, 1889-92 (Architect: Henry Irwin) represent the two trends within 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture. The former draws precedents primarily from local, regional and classical Hindu temple architectural traditions while the latter from the 'Indo-Islamic' Mughal architectural tradition. The Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center, 1976-8 (Architect: P. K. Acharya) and the Kalakshetra Cultural Center, 1980-2 (Architects: M/s. C. R. Narayanarao & Sons) represent the search for an indigenous 'Tamil' architecture. The sources for the former are primarily from the Dravidian style classical Hindu temple architecture of the region while the latter is inspired by the local and regional traditions. Paradoxically, the same or similar forms manifest opposing ideals, and represent colonial and post-colonial identities, respectively.

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For Aai & Baba

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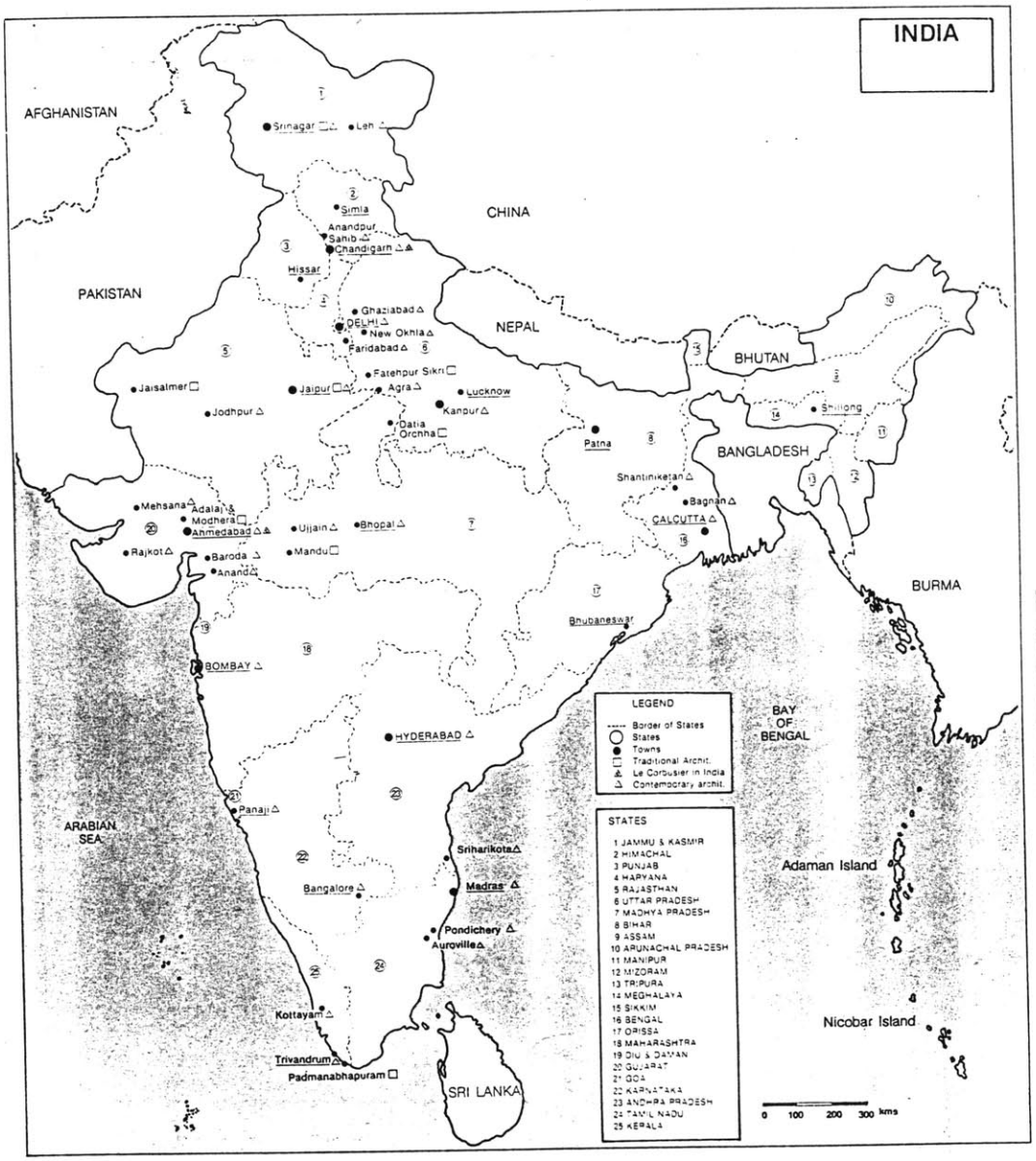

Fig. 1 Map of India.

Introduction

Politics of Architecture & Cultural Production

Architecture and Identity

On my very first visit to Madras, South India (Fig. 1), in 1992, I was struck by the similarities in the use of classical Hindu temple architectural and regional imagery in public buildings, designed by British architects under the colonial regime and certain contemporary, modern buildings, especially cultural centers, designed by Indian architects in the 1970s and 80s. My undergraduate dissertation on the three colonial buildings, built between 1874-92 and designed by Robert F. Chisholm and Henry Irwin, hinted at the similarities in the mechanisms used by architects under a colonial government and those in a democratic environment, to generate an architecture of regionalism. This intriguing issue prompted me to explore and understand the constraints under which architects and

designers operated and why certain forms and stylistic motifs were perceived as appropriate for the representation of a particular identity.

I began to wonder whether architecture was capable of expressing two seemingly opposite ideologies while using the same or similar forms. If the British architecture in Madras, in the last quarter of the 19th century was responding to an agenda of domination and was a product of its political environment, could one perceive the architecture of cultural centers in modern Madras as a kind of neo-colonialism or cultural nationalism? Or are these buildings the result of purely architectural or formal design decisions on part of architects and designers who conceived them? The acts of thinking and making or 'mechanisms' might not change or alter but the reception or 'meaning' of form changes over time, and is infused with identity. Thus, an attempt to understand the issues connecting the three aspects of form, identity and meaning could be explored through cultural artifacts, which are a product of their context— social, cultural, historical and political.

Reading only a political facet into art is granting too much to the abstract powers of representation. The ramifications are vast and numerous, both formal and political. Architecture has multiplicity of meanings, and politics is only one of the numerous layers. While there is a political aspect to architecture, the issue that is more stimulating is at what instances it breaks down, i.e., an architecture that sets out to respond to a political agenda, becomes ambiguous or does something else unintentionally. The programmatic and symbolic intentions of the client do not fully represent the complete meaning of an artifact. Through this exploration, I hope to arrive at an understanding of the degree to which architecture may be viewed as an instrument of politics and what aspects are internal or autonomous to the discipline.

At a broader level, the questions to be pondered upon are: Is architecture able or unable to represent identity, national, regional or personal? Is identity latent in a particular form or motif waiting to be revealed or is it created? Why do particular forms or motifs acquire, are infused with or are seen to represent identity? Are only indigenous forms capable of representing identity? What are considered the correct or appropriate sources or precedents for representing a particular identity, who decides this and why? What is the

role of materials, traditional craftsmen and construction techniques? What is the role of the architect or designer in the construction of identity?[1]

Between Culture and Form

Architecture and the act of design conforms to many agendas, overlapping, intersecting and frequently conflicting. The appreciation of same or similar architectural forms may be formulated within very different cultural and political agendas. Typically, identity is posited as inherent in particular forms with established meanings. This thesis proposes to illustrate how architectural form acquires meaning in a specific cultural and political context and hence this meaning is always historically determined and ambiguous. Although there are formal concerns internal to the discipline of architecture that are somewhat independent of historical context.

The meaning of any architectural form or object is neither inherent in it nor completely determined by external criteria such as, economic, political, social, technological or ideological. This would imply that an object always means the same thing. But the fact that same or similar forms have appealed to the British colonists and post-colonial nationalists in India, would imply that it does not have a singular meaning but that it acquires meaning in a particular context. Hence a study of architectural forms would call for readings that take into account, both their formal aspects and their importance as cultural products of a particular time and place.

Stanford Anderson, who has written widely on interpretation and meaning of artifacts, argues that architecture cannot be justified by the authority of an absolute truth and is rather a consequence of constantly interpreted and reinterpreted references— both internal to the discipline and external social conditions. He expresses his dissatisfaction with the emphasis on a singular interpretation of the artifact at the moment of its making, believing in the close relationship between thinking, making and its reception over time. Therefore, to him, the artifact is not merely a means of expression but a representation of reality. This implies a process and a temporal aspect to the making of artifacts and hence a

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[1] Lawrence Vale examines these issues in his book and explores the issues of identity as represented by the government complexes in post-colonial conditions. See Architecture, Power and National Identity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Also see Taisto H. Makela, Imagined Affinities: Architectural Representation and the Rhetoric of Nationalism in Finland at the Turn of the Century (Doctoral Thesis, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1991).

multiplicity of interpretations and meanings. "The artifact is always something more (or first other, then more) than what was intended."[2] While artifacts of the past stand testimony to another time and place, "There is a presentness to historical interpretation. Past times are not only what past peoples made of them but also what we interpret them to be."[3]

The autonomy of culture or form or the potential and ability of a society to define its environment in response to its values and requirements, hints at a conventional relationship between form and function. However, there exists a reciprocity between culture and other social conditions, which is the result of a society's contact with other societies, development over time and disciplines of internal criticism and analysis, which influence the interpretation of artifacts. Stanford Anderson argues that convention, far from providing easy solutions, provides a framework for interpretation and analysis. He writes: "As a social phenomena, convention provides a critically selected context for that which is to be interpreted— a context that is neither ad hoc nor intentionalist."[4]

These views are echoed by Michael Hays, who calls for architecture to make a place between merely a representation of inherited cultural values and a totally autonomous abstract formal system. In his view, it is very limiting to consider architecture merely as 'an instrument of culture' or 'as autonomous form.' He emphasizes that,

> "...so long as we construe architecture as essentially dependent on or representative of something else, we cannot see what it does itself; so long as we expect to understand architecture in terms of some anterior process, we cannot see an architecture that is, paradoxically, both the end of representation and the beginning of something quite its own."[5]

Critical architecture is an attempt to differentiate architecture from the forces that influence it— the market and prevailing taste, personal aspirations of the designer, technical and constructional constraints and finally the very purpose of the artifact. My attempt will be to look at the cultural and formal aspects of architecture, while keeping in mind the in-between zone that could yield an alternative way of reading architecture and reveal the

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2 Stanford Anderson, "The Presentness of Interpretation and of Artifacts: Towards a History for the Duration and Change of Artifacts" in John E. Handock, ed., History In, Of, and For Architecture, (University of Cincinnati, 1981) p. 50.

3 S. Anderson, p. 50.

4 S. Anderson, p. 57.

5 Michael Hays, "Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form" in Perspecta (#20, 1984) p. 17.

multiple layers of meaning of an artifact. It is by the process of interpretation that the richness of architecture is revealed. Multiple interpretations contribute to, rather than detract from its fundamental richness.

The use of architectural forms from the classical Hindu temple architecture and the local and regional[6] traditions, in South India, suggests that cultural symbolism has drawn upon the racial, linguistic, regional and religious issues, in order to articulate and symbolize identity.[7] Although, an important aspect differentiates the recent revival of traditional Hindu temple architecture in South India (and also in many parts of North India) from its colonial precedents. This is a search, not for an architectural form that represents 'Indian' architecture for British India, but is a preference of traditional forms as way of representing regional (as opposed to national) identity. A study of buildings seeking to represent the choice or taste of the people, might suggest ways of understanding the relationship between culture, politics and form. In this respect, a few cultural centers in Madras, could be scrutinized to understand the culture-politics relationship, and a comparison between the contemporary and colonial buildings would reveal the persistence of certain forms and mechanisms and hint at new emerging trends.

The Culture-Politics Relationship

Cultural production has been of great significance to the nationalist movements in the last half a century in the non-western world, to legitimize their positions, and to elucidate and define national identity. In an attempt to create a homogenous identity, architecture may be seen as instrumental in representing a singular image and suppressing alternative meanings to achieve coherence. Such an approach is essential in consolidating the notion of 'us,' and in this process objects, monuments, events and ceremonies are meaningful symbols. This projection of a national identity implies a reconstruction of the past, both by

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[6] I use the phrase 'local and regional' to mean the architecture of the region in South India including the present day states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. It is primarily a wooden architecture based on the ancient system of building in India, which is expounded in the texts like the 'Vastu Shastra'. 'Vastu' means 'dwellings of humans and Gods' and 'shastra' means 'science' and, refers to any comprehensive, authoritative and time-tested corpus of knowledge. 'Vastu Shastra' deals with town planning, house and temple design, and iconography. Its rules are derived from cosmic diagrams or 'mandala' representing the union of human and natural forces, for example, the 'Vastu purusha mandala'. Palaces, churches, mosques, temples and houses in this region, were built using this ancient system and wooden construction. It was common to both the rural and urban areas, and did not have antecedents only in the folk traditions of the region. Hence both high and low architecture were built in the same vocabulary.

[7] Susan J. Lewandowski, "The Built Environment and Cultural Symbolism in Post-Colonial Madras" in The City in Cultural Context (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984) p. 235-54.

reinventing traditions and by establishing new institutions of the state.[8] Architecture, by its very physicality and presence legitimizes the idea of nation and nationality.

Edward Said's defines culture as set of practices including the arts of representation and communication which, while being relatively autonomous of the economic and social aspects of society, is not free of political connotations. It is a concept that has a 'refining and elevating' element, in that it is a reservoir of the best of any society, in terms of its knowledge and thought.[9] But his argument is that, no aspect of our lives is totally untouched by politics and he stresses the politics underlying all cultural production.

Culture permits one to distinguish between 'us' and 'them,' and hence is a source of identity. The ways in which culture and politics affect one another is constantly in flux. Are political agendas promoted by specific political intent which generates particular urbanistic and architectural policies and stylistic preferences? Or conversely, is the evolution of certain styles, policies or programs the product of a given political context? Or are these purely formal and professional matters in isolated realms of their own? Amongst the many narratives employed by the colonized people to assert their own identity and history, nations and nationalisms are seen as the most powerful form of representing 'us.'

Understanding the relationship between culture and politics will enable us to understand the aesthetic, cultural and political dilemmas that preoccupied the British in India and concerns the administrators of modern India today. The mechanisms have modified or altered but the urge to employ cultural symbolism to legitimize power has prevailed. While it is clear that buildings are a product of social and cultural conditions, they are also ingrained with complicated issues of power and identity. On the one hand, the British colonizers built forts, and later public buildings like railway stations, post offices, law courts, etc., and on the other, the Tamil Nadu government, in the 1970-80s was building cultural centers to legitimize their power. Clifford Geertz, a leading anthropologist, argues that,

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[8] Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (New York: Verso, 1983).

[9] Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

"At the political center of any complexly organized society...there is both a governing elite and a set of symbolic forms expressing the fact that it is in truth governing."[10]

My argument is that it is not only the grand symbolic state buildings like law courts, university senate houses, railway stations and post offices, that are to be understood in terms of the cultural and political contexts, but projects like the cultural centers, built by state governments, might help us to understand the 'cultural balance of power,' to borrow a phrase from Clifford Geertz. While the government of the state of Tamil Nadu was laying claim to the golden age of the 'Dravidian' culture, the British government, in the last quarter of the 19th century, were laying claim to the golden age of the Mughals to establish themselves as legitimate political heirs, to define their identity.

The interface between religion, culture and politics, has been a historical feature of the Indian subcontinent and continues to be reflected in the built environment of post-colonial India. The polarity between the center and the region is made explicit in the case of a city like New Delhi, the capital of India, where greater emphasis is given to the expression of the composite and unified nature of Indian culture, but in the various states, regional identity is stressed in an attempt to legitimize political power. The cultural centers or theaters built in the 1950-60s show the influence of modern architecture and the western masters, employing the international style to define a program for the future. In the case of Madras, the search for a 'Tamil' identity called for a regionalist approach and the cultural centers drew from local and regional sources. This raises two important questions, on the basis of whose ideas, beliefs, values and view of the world are such decisions based[11] and what are the mechanisms utilized to express identity?

In Madras, the government employed the myths of origin in time and a golden age to establish the superiority of the South Indian 'Dravidian' culture versus the North Indian Aryan one. This dominance of the North is portrayed as the root cause of the degraded social condition of the masses. Nationalism promoted the creation of a myth of cultural origins and legitimating through art and architecture, a cultural identity distinct from that of

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[10] Clifford Geertz, Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1983) p. 125.

[11] Anthony King, Buildings and Society: Essays in the Social Development of the Built Environment (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980) p. 31.

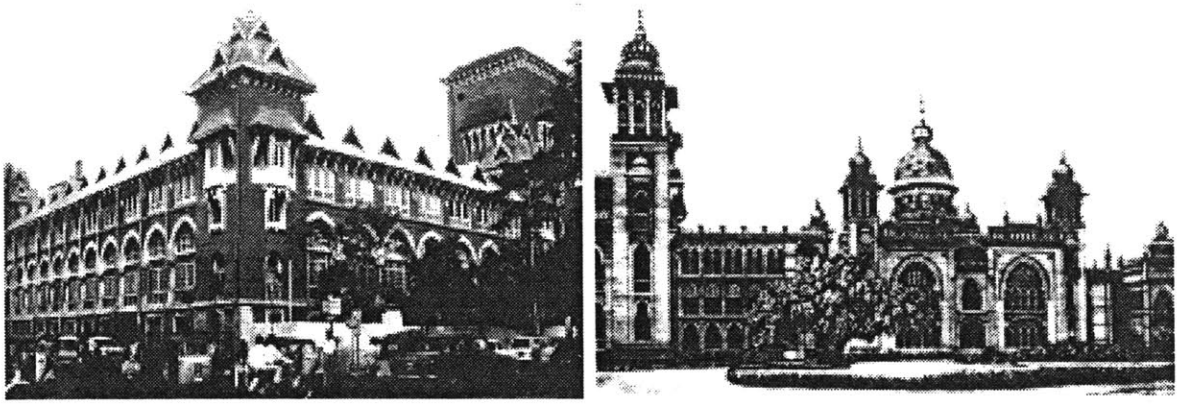

Fig. 2 Post and Telegraph Office, Madras, 1875-84, employed forms and motifs borrowed from the local and regional tradition, along with details from classical Hindu temple architecture of the region.

Fig. 3 Law Court, Madras, 1889-92, designed to represent 'British-Indian' identity, used forms and stylistic motifs of the Indo-Islamic architetcure .

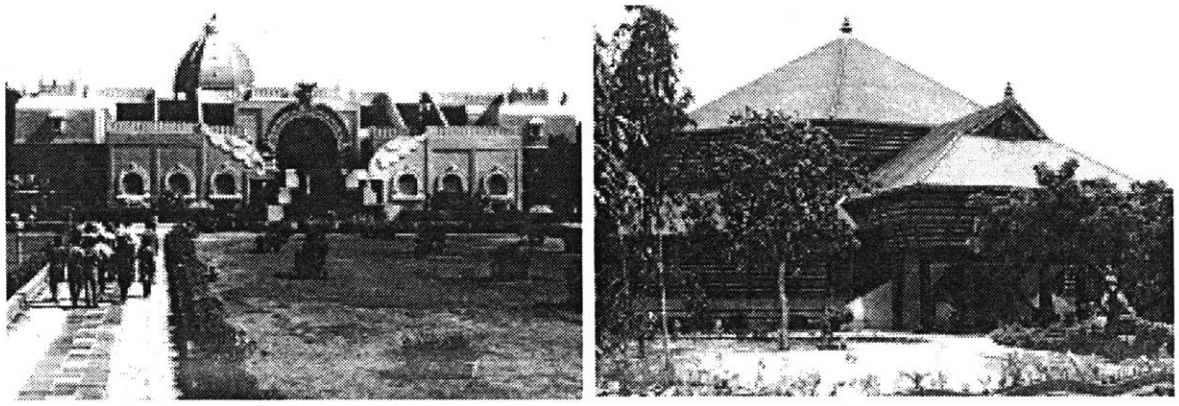

Fig. 4 Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center, Madras, 1976-8, designed to promote an awareness of Dravidian culture employed forms and motifs borrowed from the regional classical tradition of temple architecture.

Fig. 5 Kalakshetra Cultural Center, Madras, 1980-2, employs forms and motifs borrowed from the high and low traditions of the region.

Aryan North India. Cultural centers were seen to embody and be infused with meaning and symbolism, which would help to legitimize the governments' power and rule. The architectural forms were borrowed from the classical Hindu temple architecture, specifically the 'Dravidian' style and local and regional traditions alike. Thus, forms were invested with new meaning and employed to represent a particular identity.

Form and Meaning: Madras— A Case

Statements of identity can take many forms and may use many different symbols. These symbols may be in the form of a government complex, parades, flags or even cultural centers, and assist the state in legitimizing or give significance to their power. Objects, events, monuments and ceremonies are symbols loaded with meaning and contribute to the construction and the consolidation of the idea of 'us.' The mechanisms which have been used by nations for constructing their identity and legitimizing their claim for recognition and representation are, a myth of origins in space and time, a myth of ancestry, migration and liberation, a myth of the golden age, decline and rebirth.[12] Further, the architectural forms employed to make visible this myth making process are borrowed from both high and low traditions of architecture, and both lend themselves equally to the making of the national myth.

To understand the relationship between form, culture and politics, and form, meaning and identity, I have chosen two buildings built by British architects Robert F. Chisholm and Henry Irwin, 1875 onwards, the Post and Telegraph Office 1875-84 (Fig. 2), and the Law Court 1889-92, (Fig. 3), and compare them to two buildings built between late 1970s and early 80s, the Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center (Fig. 4), 1976-8 (attributed to the architect: Prasanna Kumar Acharya) and the Kalakshetra Cultural Center (Fig. 5), 1980-2 (architects: M/s. C. R. Narayanarao & Sons), in the city of Madras, the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu (under British rule it was the Madras Presidency and later the State of Madras) in South India, in terms of their physical and formal attempts to contextualize the buildings and the political environments that produced them. The attempt is to understand that it is only to a degree that the architects could be manipulated by external forces and in most cases, the architects and designers, while operating within such constraints, were able to contextualize their buildings in a sympathetic response to place and time.

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12 Anthony D. Smith, "Legends and Landscapes" in The Ethnic Origin of Nations (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1986) p. 174-208.

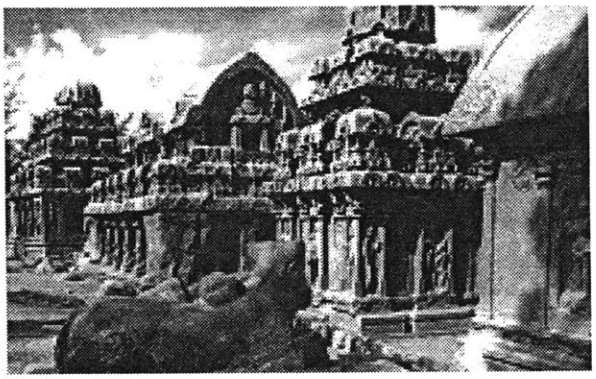

Fig. 6 'Rathas' or chariots at Mahabalipuram, a fine example of the Dravidian style classical temple architecture, imitate timber structures with brackets, joists, rafters and cross-beams carved in stone.

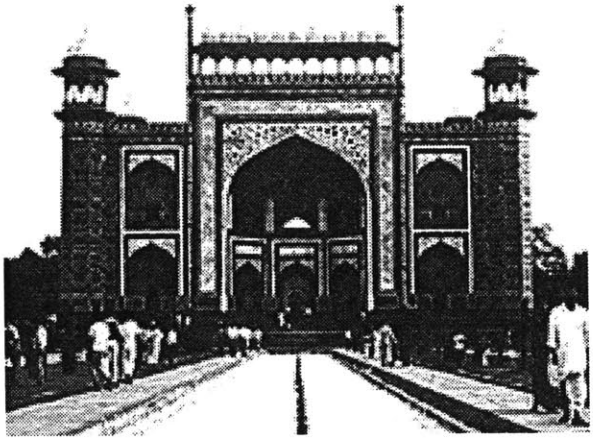

Fig. 7 Entrance gate, Taj Mahal, Agra, 1630-52, with the characteristic features of Indo-Islamic archirecture, a screen arched entrance gate flanked by turrets.

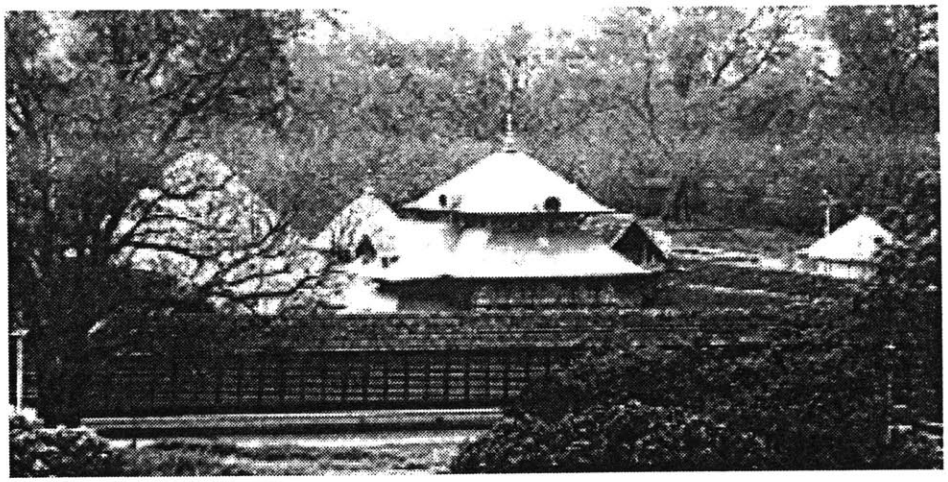

Fig. 8 Vadakunnatha Temple, Trichur with its characteristic inner sanctum topped by a pyramidical wooden roof and a dance hall opposite it, is an example of the local and regional temple architecture.

To me these buildings are paradigmatic, firstly because of the political climate of the time when these buildings were constructed and secondly for their architectural sources and precedents. The two colonial buildings of the last quarter of the 19th century, mentioned above, were sponsored by the British government, and contributes to the construction of a 'British-Indian' Identity. To represent this identity, the British began to appropriate design forms from the classical temple (Fig. 6), Indo-Islamic (Fig. 7) and regional (Fig. 8) sources and precedents, hence attempting to locate the buildings in its context. In the contemporary buildings, both state governments (under different leadership) which sponsored the buildings chose as their symbolic building cultural centers, and by the very choice of the architectural language suggested a multi-layered symbolism and meaning.

The two colonial buildings were conceived and constructed in the heyday of the debate over architectural style for British India. In the aftermath of the revolt of 1857 and following the proclamation of Queen Victoria as the Empress of India in 1858, India was perceived as an imperial domain rather than a solely proprietary one. The syncretic hybrid of 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture was seen to represent this imperial image. The Post and Telegraph Office, 1875-84, stood more directly for western progress and modernization brought to the 'natives' by the technologically advanced British. It used the regional idiom and a smattering of details borrowed from classical Hindu temple architecture of the region. The Law Court, 1889-92, which was representative of the new judicial system for the Indians employed a syncretic mixture of western and Indo-Islamic architecture, with forms borrowed from the Mughal architectural tradition, especially from Delhi, Agra & Fatehpur Sikri.

The Hindu sculpture and ornamentation presented problems of accommodation to western aesthetics[13] and hence its use in the design of buildings which represented 'British-Indian' identity may have been considered inappropriate. The leaning towards borrowing from the regional idiom may have been due to the views held by political leaders

[13] Partha Mitter in his book Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) points out that this resistance of western historians to Hindu iconography and to profuse ornamental sculpture of South Indian temples was due to a fundamental classical bias in the western art historical tradition. This may have also been due to the lack of understanding and study of Hindu Architecture. This was before the establishment of an institutionalized scientific and rational approach to the study of ancient monuments. It was only in 1864 when the Archeological Survey of India was established that an attempt to document and study the ancient monuments was begun. Even then, no attempt was made to draw an understanding of Indian architecture which was so rooted in the textual works like the 'Vastu Shastra,' from the texts themselves.

like Lord Napier, Governor of Madras at this time, who declared the Hindu architecture, with its profuse sculptural ornamentation,

> "...unavailable, under the present Government, for the purposes of State, and ill adapted for the common and public use of the collective people."[14]

But due to the employment on most of these projects, of traditional craftsmen, who were trained in the Hindu temple building tradition, the use of details and forms from the Hindu tradition would have been unavoidable. And the use of the local and regional idiom would have been perceived as appropriate due to its ease of construction, skills and techniques, and availability of local materials. Most early 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings share this common characteristic of using precedents from the classical temple architecture and, local and regional traditions.

Although by the turn of the century, the creation of a universal idiom for all of India took precedence, and the buildings reflected an overt use of Mughal precedents from Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. The British buildings of the 17th- early 19th centuries reflected a western precedent and employed the western classical, Victorian Gothic, and Italian Renaissance idioms in the design of the buildings. Thus the 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings were an attempt to create an 'Indian' architecture rooted in the context and posited the 'Indian' identity versus the western one.

The two cultural centers of the 1970s and 80s posited their identity as a polarity between the South Indian 'Dravidian' and the North Indian Aryan culture. The Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center, 1976-8 posited the political conflict at two levels, one at the level of the national politics— regenerating the awareness of Dravidian culture as being older and superior to the Aryan one, and at another level it emphasized the gulf between the status of the non-Brahmins and the Brahmins— the poor non-Brahmin masses versus the rich Brahmin landlords.[15] Although the government of the state of Tamil Nadu was under different leadership by early 1980s, the agenda and the mechanisms remained the same by the time the Kalakshetra Cultural Center was completed in 1982. It was built to emphasize the pre-Aryan heritage of the Tamil people, and it utilized an architectural language

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[14] Lord Napier, "Modern Architecture in India" in Builder (1870) p. 681.

[15] See Section II: "Towards a Regional Expression: Origins of 'Tamil' Cultural Nationalism" of this thesis, for definitions of terms like Brahmin, non-Brahmin and Dravidian, p. 107-15.

primarily of the stone architecture of the classical temples— a high tradition of the past. The Kalakshetra Cultural Center sought its imagery in the local and regional traditions, which included both the high and low tradition. Paradoxically, both buildings represented 'Tamil' identity— one with its precedents in the stone temple architecture and the other in the wooden architecture of the region, as opposed to the homogenizing attitude of the politicians in the national government at New Delhi, seeking a universal, secular image of India. The sponsorship of the above mentioned projects and many others by the state governments, is a conscious decision towards the construction of a 'Tamil' identity. In consonance with this role, the new institutions such as the auditoriums and cultural centers, which sprouted all over Madras and other cities like Bangalore, used the language of classical temple architecture or local and regional traditions to express identity.

Like the colonial government which used classical temple architecture and, local and regional forms to express a 'British-Indian' identity, the 1970-80s Tamil Nadu government has also drawn on the cultural symbolism of the classical Hindu temple architectural and, local and regional traditions to reinforce a 'Tamil' identity, creating an urban landscape that meets the contemporary needs of its citizens, but is also legitimating its own political agenda. In this respect, the cultural centers, infused with symbolism, are revealing cultural products, which would help us to understand the complex relationship between culture and politics.

This is a search to find the physical forms that will reflect the Indianness of the region. The symbolic images being projected by the government of Tamil Nadu reflects attempts to link public buildings with indigenous Tamil traditions of architecture. The indigenizing process symbolically links religion, culture and politics. In the post-colonial situation, in the attempt to articulate a regional identity, the effort has been to go to the roots, i.e., to the indigenous past.

My interest is not that both the British and the Tamil Nadu governments were selectively using Hindu and Indo-Islamic built forms to express 'British-Indian' and 'Tamil' identity respectively, to legitimate their positions, but the fact that the same or similar forms and mechanisms were employed to represent paradoxically opposing ideals. V. S. Naipaul, a novelist (whose grandparents had come from India as indentured laborers

to the British colony of Trinidad), points out the common fact that the nationalists fashioned themselves in the image of the colonialists, and says that,

> "The architecture of nationalist India comes close in spirit to the architecture of the Raj: they are both the work of people consciously seeking to express ideas of themselves."[16]

The use of traditional forms combined with modern technology, hint at an attempt to define a context and reinterpret the society's conventions, without arbitrariness or intent. While, the buildings were conceived with a primary aim towards political symbolism, the architects have intentionally or unintentionally, imparted to these buildings a significance which goes beyond just a political justification. The use of traditional forms, materials, techniques, skills and craftsmen in conjunction with modern materials and technology, are factors which make these buildings cultural artifacts of their place and time. The preoccupation with the visual and symbolic aspects of architectural form and its cultural meaning has led to an increased autonomy of the architectural object.

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16 V. S. Naipaul, An Area of Darkness (New York: Random House, 1964) p. 218.

Section I

Quest for a Hybrid Expression

Colonialism & Identity: Symbols and Forms

In the mid 19th century, the world was characterized by two kinds of societies: the powerful, dominant, progressive and technologically advanced, and the powerless, dominated, backward and tradition-bound. This difference was preconceived and constructed rather than actual. This cognizance of 'otherness' and its concomitant understanding of self was perpetuated through policies, urban form and architecture. This is the argument of Edward Said's book "Orientalism," which points to the 'difference' and the role played by literature in the creation, maintenance and production of the construct. He describes the orientalist process in which the image was created and declared as the reality, or else parts of the reality were taken and used to depict the whole. He stresses that the 'orient' is a creation of European colonialism which permitted domination. A small number of Europeans controlled a vast indigenous population by defining themselves as

progressive, rational and modern, as opposed to the mystical, timeless and traditional orient. In the case of India, the British stressed the feminine and mystical aspects of Indian culture and tradition versus the portrayal of themselves as masculine and rational.[17]

Relevant to this discussion are the definitions of the term 'colony' as "...a settlement in a new land, consisting typically of a small group of businessmen, administrators and soldiers, subject to a parent state."[18] While discussing the issue of dominance as expressed through architecture and urban form, Emerson's definition of colonialism is important. He defines it as "...the establishment and maintenance, for an extended time, of rule over an alien people that is separate and subordinate to the ruling power."[19] For the colonists the colony was a "...propriety domain to be exploited for the benefit of the parent state."[20]

More specifically, in the context of India, colonialism was understood as a binary opposition and, "...the domination by a European minority (characterized by a machine-oriented civilization with Christian origins, a powerful economy, and a rapid rhythm of life)— and the assertion of racial and cultural superiority over a materially inferior native majority (characterized by its non-Christian origins, a backward economy and a slow rhythm of life)— and the imposition of the former civilization upon the latter."[21]

Historically, colonialism constitutes the 'idea,' the altruistic, civilizing mission, underlying commercial gain and domination. Thus, the two justifications of colonialism are inherently contrary to each other, one, a self-seeking and selfish motive of commercial gain and the other, liberal and benevolent, aiming at progress of the local populace. In the case of India, the tension between these contrary motives— an assertion of power over an alien populace, and an intention to remake India on western models so that empire would no longer be required— could not easily be resolved. While the liberal and benevolent aspects were stressed, the self-serving element inevitably developed, and every event, symbol or

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17 Ronald Inden, Imaging India (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) and Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: The Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

18 M. Knight, "Colonies" in Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences vIII, Ed. E. R. A. Seligman (New York, 1930) p. 653.

19 Meera Kosambi, Bombay in Transition: The growth and Social Ecology of a Colonial City— 1880-1980 (Stockholm: Almquist & Witsell International, 1987) p. 22.

20 Oxford English Dictionary.

21 R. Emerson, "Colonialism" in The Encyclopedia of Social Sciences Ed. D. L. Sills (New York, 1968) p. 1.

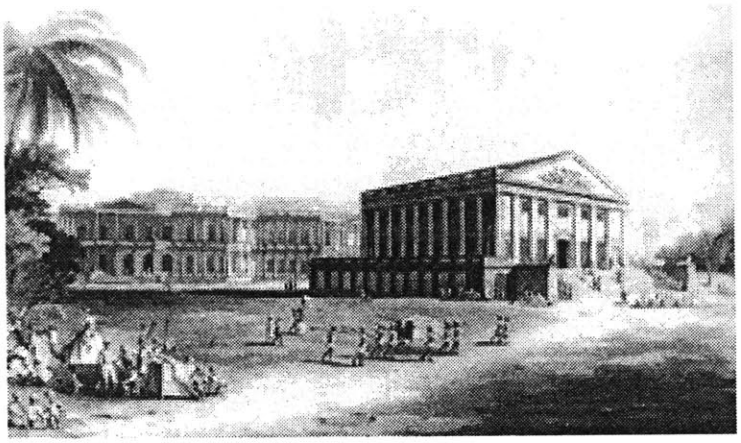

Fig. 9 Government House, Madras, 1798, with colonnaded verandahs and the Doric Banquet Hall adjacent to it, shows the use of western classical forms in the early British architecture in India.

building was subservient to this role. The making of symbols, the assignment of roles and the interpretation of history ensure positions of dominance and control. The justification for colonialism may be understood through the manifestations of motivations and intentions of symbols, and by analyzing how symbols mediate meaning.

One such symbol were the Government Houses, which were used as symbols to create and enforce an image of the powerful, and were the most blatant architectural assertion of the empire. These viceregal residences, while being very similar to Buckingham Palace, London, were intended for a different purpose. Unlike the palace, it was not a symbolic focus of national sentiment and the residence of the royal family, but was a representation of the authority of an imperial power and the residence of its representative in the colony.

The construction of the Government Houses in Calcutta and Madras (Fig. 9), two of the most prosperous early British Indian port cities, between 1798-1805 was a controversial issue. The East India Company directors, still committed to a vision of the British as peaceful traders in India, were aware of the significance of these new buildings and were very critical of its obvious overtones of power and dominance.[22] The East India Company was very clearly motivated by business concerns and did not appreciate this assertion of impressive grandeur.

But the eventual construction of these buildings and the heavy expenditure in a building program hints at the increasing autonomy of the British representatives in India, in as early as the last decade of the 18th century. Clearly the Government House was a symbol of power, and was intended and undertaken consciously with a view to its political effect. This, in my view, is the first example of the use of architecture for the purposes of domination, by the British traders in India. The architectural language of the Government Houses had precedents in western classical architecture which was perceived to represent the superiority of the British culture over an alien and inferior Indian culture. At this time, the British did not give much thought to the adoption and assimilation of Indian forms and designs, as it was considered to be inferior and hence unsuitable to express their identity.

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22 Thomas R. Metcalf, "Introduction" in An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj (London: Faber and Faber, 1989) p. 1-23.

Fig. 10 A painting by Majorie Shoosmith, 1931, depicting a 'durbar' scene, and the presentation of the drawings and models of New Delhi by the architects and engineer to the Viceroy.

Later, in the last quarter of the 19th century, the debate of 1873 over issues of assimilation and association established the 'Indo-Saracenic' as the language for the architecture of the empire, buildings like university senate houses (cf. Fig. 33), post & telegraph offices (cf. Fig. 2), law courts (cf. Fig. 3), railway stations (cf. Fig. 36), schools and colleges (cf. Figs. 28 & 29), etc., symbolized the progress, power and supremacy of the British. After the revolt of 1857, the British consciously strove to consolidate their political power and began to incorporate forms and stylistic motifs from Indian architecture.

Another mechanism used by the British in India for the purposes of legitimation and domination was the 'durbar'[23] an impressive imperial ritual, borrowed from the Mughals, which proclaimed the British as legitimate successors to the Mughal court. This is made explicit in the painting by Majorie Shoosmith, commissioned on the occasion of the completion of New Delhi in 1931, which depicts the presentation of drawings and models of New Delhi to the Viceroy (Fig. 10). Nothing inappropriate in the subject of depiction, except that the scene is a Mughal court & the Europeans are dressed in the court attire of the Mughals. Lord Irving, the Viceroy, is seated on a throne and presenting the drawings and models to him are architects Edwin Lutyen, Herbert Baker and the Chief Engineer, Sir Alexander Rouse. In the stone building, in the background of the painting, is the Lady Irwin in 'purdah.' Although the painting was executed in 1931 and the scene which is its subject is very specific to its time, the mechanisms and tools of legitimating were a part of the British administrative policy from the immediate aftermath of the revolt of 1857.

Thus, rituals, events, painting, architecture and other forms of representation were employed by the British to express 'British-Indian' identity. The ideas of association and assimilation were intended for the purposes of domination and control. Despite their explicit political agendas, these artifacts are products of interaction between two cultures. The colonial buildings were the result of the interaction between an ancient culture and an industrializing one. A study and analysis of two paradigmatic buildings of the last quarter of the 19th century in Madras, would help to understand the buildings not only as manifestations of power and domination, but as cultural products of their place and time.

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23 For a detailed discussion on the 'durbar' as a theater of colonial domination, see Hosagrahar Jyoti, "City as Durbar: Theater and Power in Imperial Delhi" in Forms of Dominance ed. Nezar AlSayyad (New York: Avebury, 1992) p. 83-105.

Fig. 11 Map of Madras showing the Kapaliswarar Temple, the Fort St. George, the George Town and the monuments on the Marina.

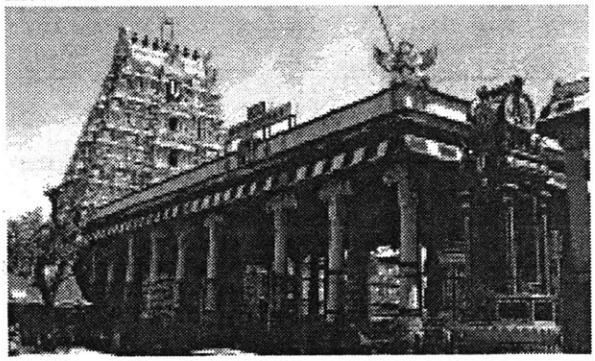

Fig. 12 Kapaliswarar Temple, the center of the ancient town of Mylapore, has the characteristic gopuram or temple tower, porch with rounded eaves and sculpted balconies.

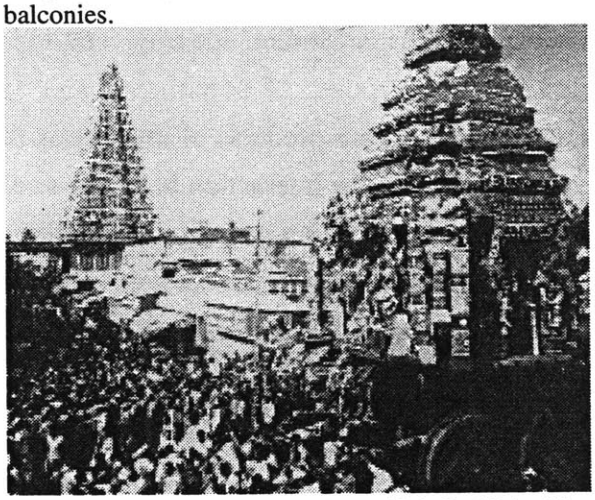

Fig. 13 'Ratha' festival, during which the idol of the Gods and Goddesses are carried in the chariot along the four streets surrounding the temple.

Madras: From a Temple Town to a Colonial Port City

Long before the British established Madras (Fig. 11)— a fortified warehouse on the southeastern coast of India, in 1639, the town of Mylapore flourished near the site of the present city. Between 6-13th centuries, this region was dominated by the Pallava and the Chola dynasty, and was one of the many medieval ports. According to a legend, St. Thomas, the apostle, settled in Mylapore around 70 AD and preached Christianity. In 1498, Vasco da Gama reached the western coast of India and not long after that the Portuguese established themselves on the eastern coast and built San Thome, a fortified settlement, in 1522. Other European powers — the Dutch, the English and the French, soon followed.

Mylapore was a prosperous port since ancient times[24] with the temple as the central focus. The residences were organized around the temple, on the basis of their caste, social status and proximity to the ruling power. The temples were a central focus of the settlement and they were surrounded by four streets (temple car/cart street), forming a 'mandala'.[25] The spatial form of these complexes reflected a particular Hindu world view based on the concept of the microcosm (the world of humans) paralleling the macrocosm (the universe).

> "...the craftsmen who fashioned the temples and their sculptures depicted their Gods as visible symbols of power as it was manifest to them in real life."[26]

In Madras, the Kapaliswarar temple (Fig. 12), an example of Dravidian architecture, was the center of the pre-colonial town. The main shrine faces a tank to its West and has an exquisitely sculpted 'gopuram' or gateway to the East. One of the greatest of the temple festivals is the annual grand procession of the bronze statues of the canonized saints, which circumambulates the temple. The statues of the saints are carried in palanquins, while that of the presiding deities are carried in a temple 'ratha' or chariot, along the four streets that surround the temple (Fig. 13).

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24 S. Muthiah, a journalist who has written extensively on the history of the city, is of the view that Mylapore is probably the same port mentioned by Ptolemy as Maillarpha or Mylarphon. It is also mentioned by Arabs in the 11th century as Maila or Meilan. A Catalan map of 1375 shows a port called Mirapor very close to its present location. See S. Muthiah, Madras Discovered: A Historical Guide to Walking Around (Madras: Affiliated East West Press Pvt. Ltd., 1981) p. 85-91.

25 The 'Vastu Purusha Mandala' is an image assumed by existence, by the phenomenal world, of the laws governing the cosmos and is evocative of the cosmic orders.

26 Temples of India (New Delhi: Government Publication Division, 1968).

Direct contact between India and Britain dates back to the early 17th century, when the English merchants came to India, as they went to other parts of the world, to obtain 'exotic' and expensive commodities that were in great demand in Europe. The East India Company was formed in 1599, with a primary aim to play a direct role in the supply of spices to Europe as a competitor to the Dutch, and hence Indonesia not India was the initial focus of the company. They were attracted to Indian ports by the textiles that were sold here and which could be used to barter for Indonesian spices. Therefore, in addition to Surat (the first trading outpost or 'factory' established in 1613, on the western coast), the British sought access to the ports of the Coromandel on the eastern coast of India, in an attempt to establish themselves as traders.

The colonial port city of Madras was predicated on different notions of the relationship between religious, political and economic power. The initial form of colonial Madras resembles that of Madurai or Srirangam, South Indian temple towns since antiquity, with the factory and the fort St. George replacing the temple and palace as an organizing principle. Those who had highest economic status, the European and Indian merchants, resided closer to the factory, as economic power was of prime importance in early Madras.

The government complex in fort St. George, Madras, like the colonial complexes in Delhi, Calcutta or Bombay, gave a sense of colonial monumentality, because these were symbols of progress and colonial power. The earlier buildings (cf. Figs. 9 & 28) show influence of western styles, with classical facades and pillared porticos. But after the revolt of 1857, the designers, with obviously the backing of the politicians, consciously incorporated indigenous design forms and popularized 'Indo-Saracenic' style.

The style was expected to establish the British as legitimate heirs to the Mughal empire. It was seen as a style universally applicable to all of India and was expected to provide a homogeneity to the architectural expression of empire. The early buildings show the influences of regional forms and motifs, but by the beginning of the 20th century, the regional disparities were seen as deterrent to the creation of an universal idiom and hence Mughal architectural precedents became the source of architectural imagery as is seen in the Law Court, Madras (cf. Fig. 3), the National Art Gallery, Madras (cf. Fig. 34), and the buildings of New Delhi (cf. Fig. 37).

The Case Studies, 1874-92

The two attitudes towards buildings in the last quarter of the 19th century were— one, that of the Public Works Department engineers, and the other of the Chief Architects in the various state governments or princely states. The building work of the Public Works Department were utilitarian and functional, without ornamentation and employing skilled or unskilled labor.[27] The attitude of the Public Works Department was mainly responsible for the altered status of the traditional craftsmen, who were not patronized by the British building programs and hence were forced to abandon their traditional crafts and skills to look for other opportunities. The revivalists were concerned about the status of the craftsmen and their skills, and hence, promoted 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture as a means of countering such an adverse effect. And architects, like Chisholm and Irwin, employed traditional craftsmen and, forms and motifs in the construction of their buildings.

Thus, besides its political approval and sanction, 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture was a direct response to the deteriorated status of skilled traditional craftsmen, who could be a part of the building construction, and help reduce the phenomenal costs of construction of these ambitious building projects. It was the product of its own time and reflected the attitude of eclecticism and assemblage of parts borrowed from various historical periods, as was the mode of time in Europe at this time. While its political impact cannot be discounted and is very much a part of any interpretation, it is not the only factor responsible for its conception and application. To illustrate the fact that Chisholm and Irwin while being a part of the colonial mentality that shaped the architectural taste of the time were variants, or individuals performing within the constraints of the colonial framework, I have chosen their designs for the Post and Telegraph Office (cf. Fig. 2), 1875-84 and the Law Court (cf. Fig. 3), 1889-92 and will attempt to critically analyze the formal aspects of, and the antecedents to their designs. I would like to stress that the architects or designers were not openly pandering to a political ideology. Rather they were doing their best in terms of design decisions and construction techniques while operating within the constraints of political ideologies.

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27 F. S. Growse, who, while working for the PWD at Mathura and Bulandshahr, in northern India, employed local skilled craftsmen, techniques and local precedents, while designing and constructing his projects. But he was an exception rather than the rule. For a detailed discussion see G. H. R. Tillotson, The tradition of Indian Architecture: Continuity, Controversy and Change Since 1850 p. 84-92.

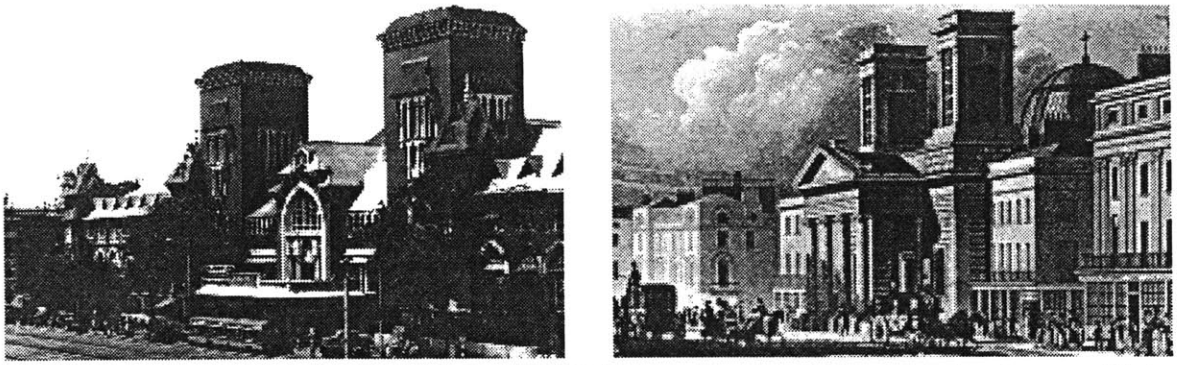

Fig. 14a Post and Telegraph Office, Madras, 1875-84, sits at the edge of the street facing the sea, with the entrance to the main hall directly via a porch on the street.

Fig. 14b Regent Street, London with St. George's Chapel, sitting at the edge of the street and making the urban edge.

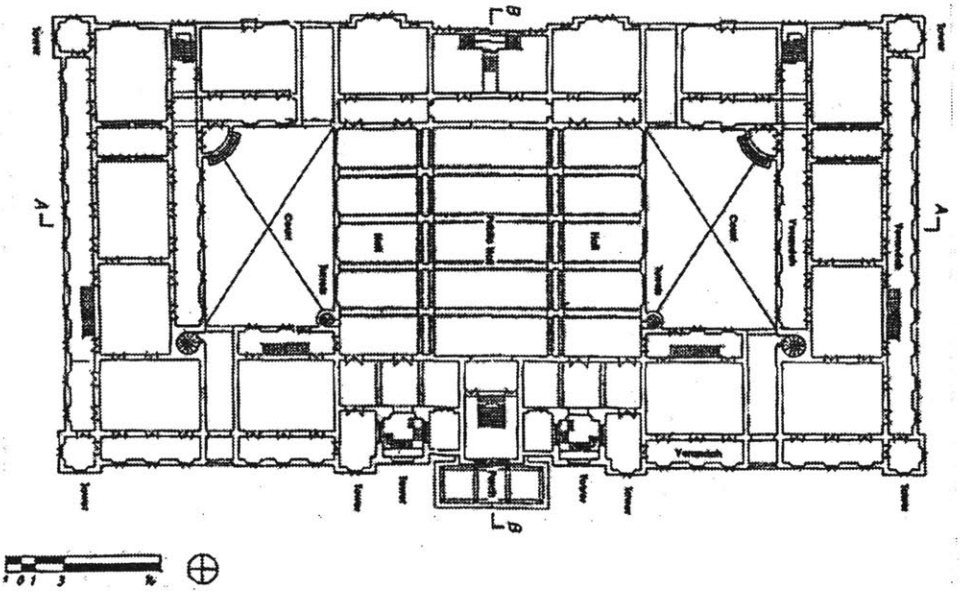

Fig. 15 Plan, Post and Telegraph Office, Madras, 1875-84 has a main hall flanked by courtyards with office spaces organized around it.

The two buildings represent the changing ideology of the British in the historical moment of late 19th Century India. Both the Post & Telegraph Office and the Law Court stands for the use by masses and common people and represented the bringing of modern institutions, systems and technology to the 'natives' for their betterment and advance. The Post and Telegraph Office brings together, in a synthesized manner, the local and regional, and western precedents. The architectural language of the Law Court makes overt references to Indo-Islamic and western precedents.

While it is important to keep in mind the politics behind the increased use of 'Indo-Saracenic' syncretic hybrid for British architecture in India, of immense value would be an understanding of the idiom in terms of its cultural and formal significance. Due to the use of Indian forms and motifs, the buildings might have found popular and public acceptance, but the use of 'Indo-Saracenic' mode was also partly a result of the concern of the cost of construction, and the issue of employment of traditional craftsmen, materials and techniques. The analysis of these buildings in terms of its formal, spatial and constructional aspects, might help us to understand the rationale behind the use of the 'Indo-Saracenic' idiom, besides its obviously political approval and symbolism.

The Post and Telegraph Office, 1875-84

The Post and Telegraph Office is located to the North of fort St. George, in the Black (George) Town[28] on the First Line Beach Road. It represented the modern technology brought to the 'natives,' by the British, for their progress and development. It was the expression of an industrializing nation and represented the power of the British. Its stylistic precedents are borrowed primarily from the local and regional traditions. It was a building for the use of the common people and to the present day, is used for the function it was intended. This building very clearly emphasizes the dual nature of the British policy—power and domination by the introduction of modern technology and science and, assimilation by employing local and regional forms for their buildings. This is reflected in the main central hall of the Post and Telegraph Office, which is constructed with

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28 The Black Town which was renamed George Town, and was the area where the 'natives' settled, desiring to be close to the fort and the surrounding fortified white settlement. It was the center from which the trade and business was conducted since its establishment. It continues to be the central business district of Madras. Norma Evenson, The Indian Metropolis: A View Toward the West (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

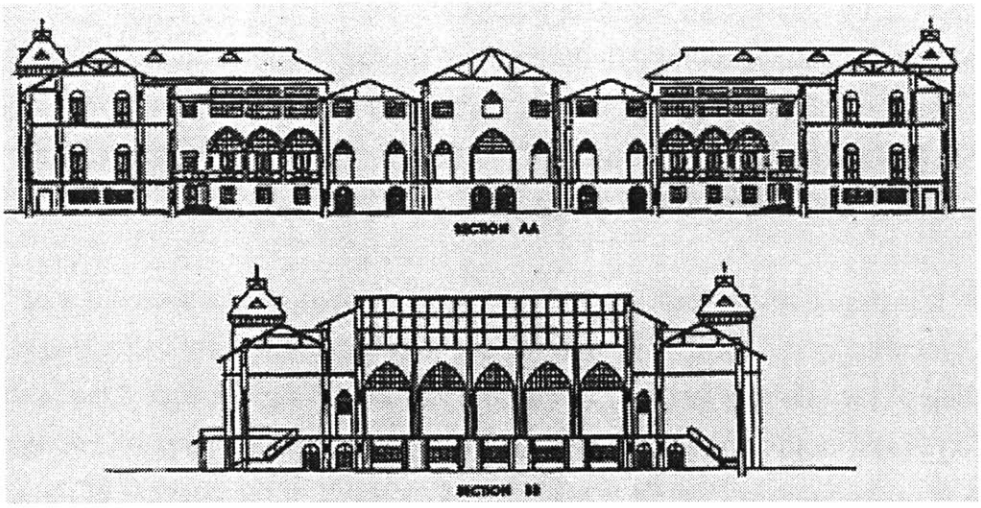


Fig. 16a Section, Post and Telegraph Office, Madras, 1875-84, emphasizes the verandah-like element surrounding the building. The cast-iron and glass main hall is dressed in a brick and timber exterior employing traditional forms.

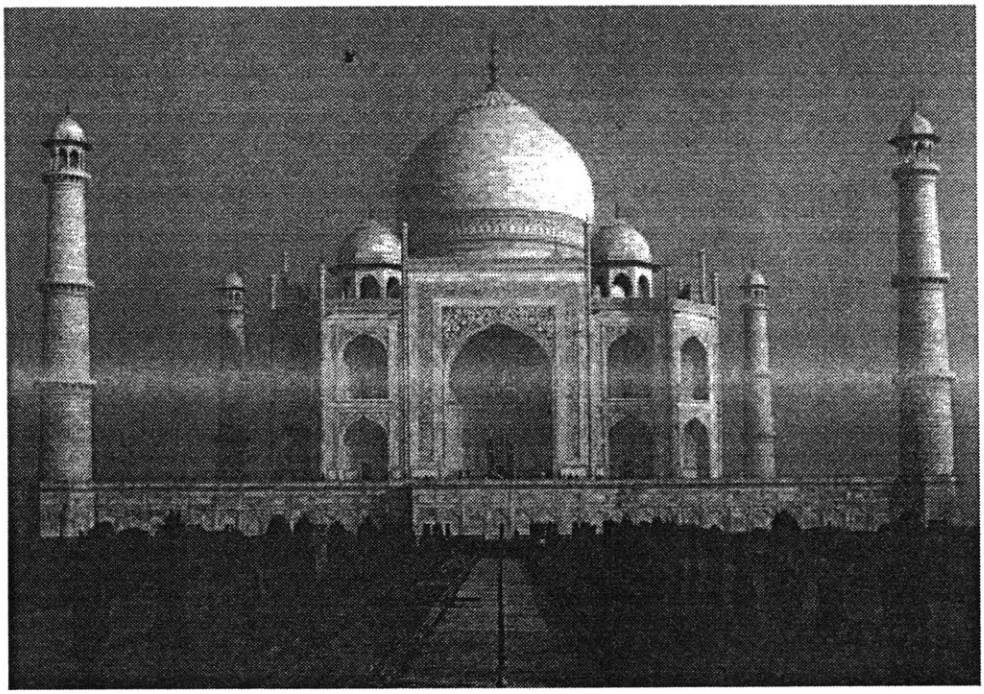


Fig. 16b Taj Mahal, Agra, 1630-52, showing the typical domed tomb with screen arched entrance flanked by minarets and turrets.

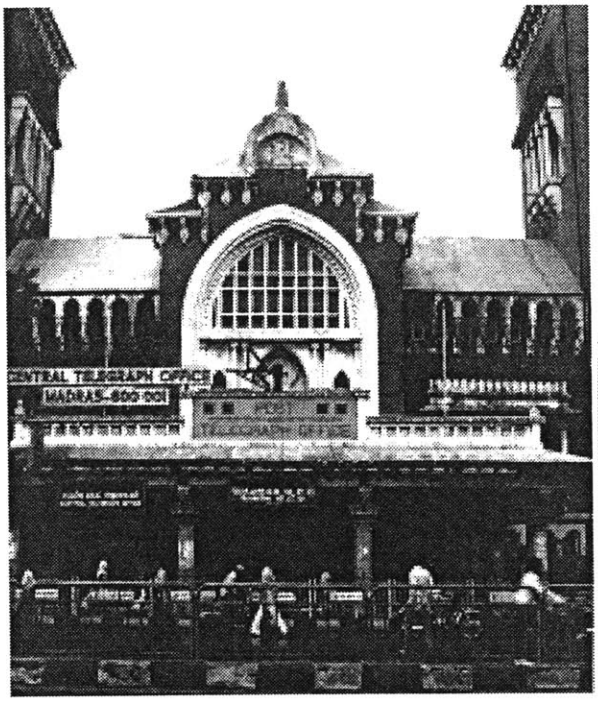
contemporary materials and techniques, while the exterior of the building is dressed in a local or regional garb.

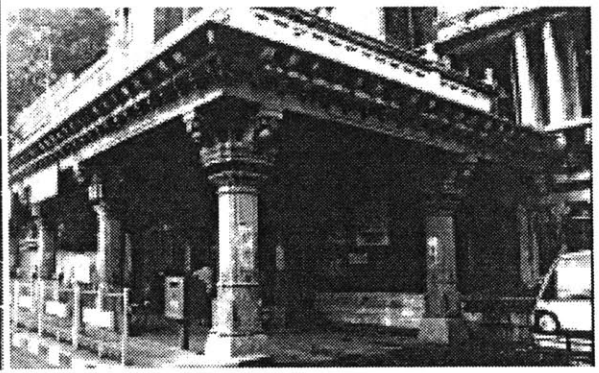
The building is located at the edge of the street, facing the sea. It is not an object in a garden, rather it makes a definitive response to the street and defines the urban edge. The porch leads to the main entrance hall via a lobby which is a space for circulation and vertical traverse. The building has two service entrances and exits from the main and back street directly into the courtyard. There is also a subsidiary entrance from the back street into the main hall.

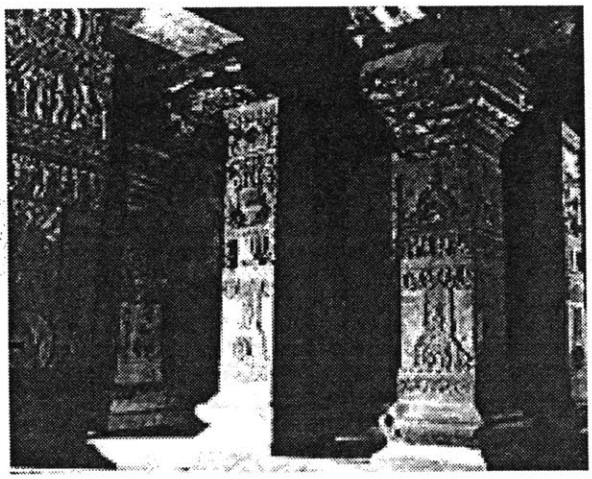
The siting of the building at the edge of a main street (Fig. 14a & cf. Fig. 2) is similar to urban, public buildings in England and Europe. Local palaces and ordinary houses, temples and mosques, were usually axially or randomly located within a walled enclosure. In the Indo-Islamic context, buildings either sat at the end of an axis, as a focus (Taj Mahal, Agra) or at the intersection of two axii (Humayun's Tomb, Delhi), in gardens of their own. This was also the specific case of colonial public buildings and bungalows in Madras, which were sited within expansive gardens. Hence, the positional precedent is western (Fig. 14b) wherein the building sits at the very edge of the street, facing the sea, and contributing to the making of a promenade, giving a new urban character to the city (colonial Bombay and Calcutta).

Such buildings were fast rising in the industrializing environment of the late 19th century England, and the Post and Telegraph Office has essentially a western prototype, as there exists no precedent in the Indian context of pre-colonial times. Its plan (Fig. 15) is of the courtyard type, with the main hall separating the courtyards, around which the secondary spaces (administrative offices) are organized. It is similar to many public buildings in England and especially the manor houses. The courtyard plan is also a common feature of local and regional palaces (Padmanabhapuram palace complex, Kerala) and houses. But, in general, the attitude to plan-type remains rooted in the European tradition with minor 'native' intrusions.

The British made no attempts to imitate the spatial principles (Fig. 16a) of the Indian architectural tradition. The Post and Telegraph Office has a low roofed porch that leads via a flight of stairs to a double height hall, flanked by two courtyards, around which are







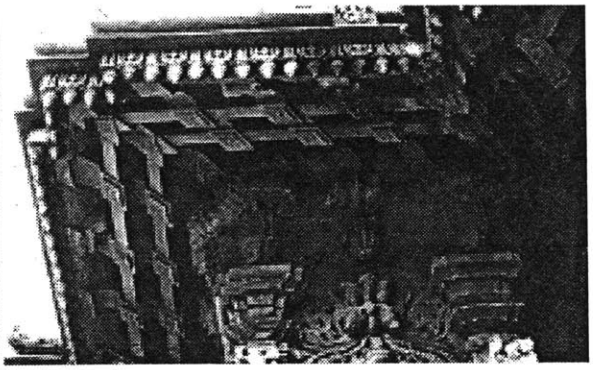


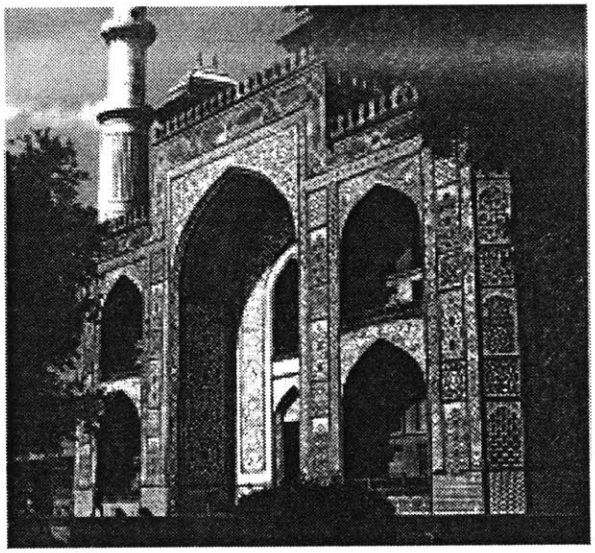
Fig. 17a Entrance, Post and Telegraph Office, 1875-84, with the characteristic screen arch with the porch in front.

Fig. 17b Porch, Post and Telegraph Office, Madras, 1875-84 is assembled with elements borrowed from the classical and regional temple architectural tradition and imitates the wooden construction in stone.

Fig. 17c Kailasanath Temple, Ellora with a characteristic sculpted column with traditional motifs.

fig. 17d Halebid Temple, Belur with the stone construction of the roof imitating wooden details

Fig. 17e Akbar's Tomb, Sikandra, Agra with the screen arched entrance.

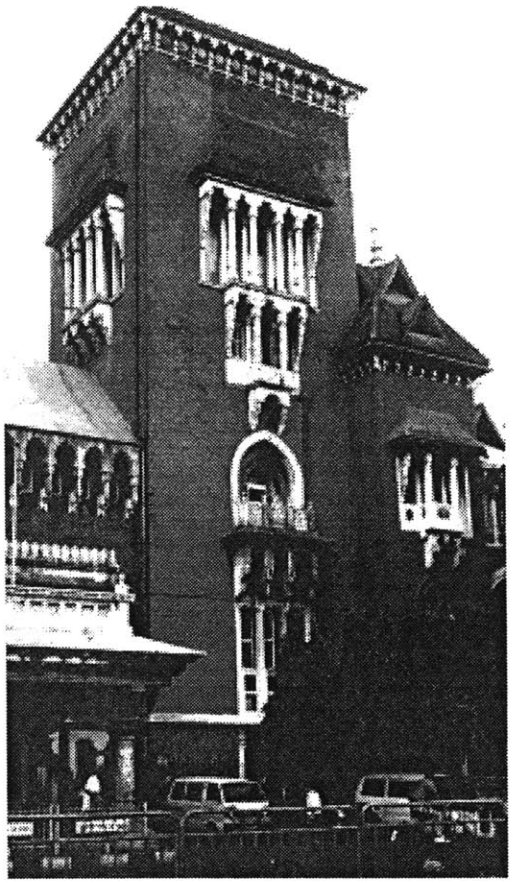


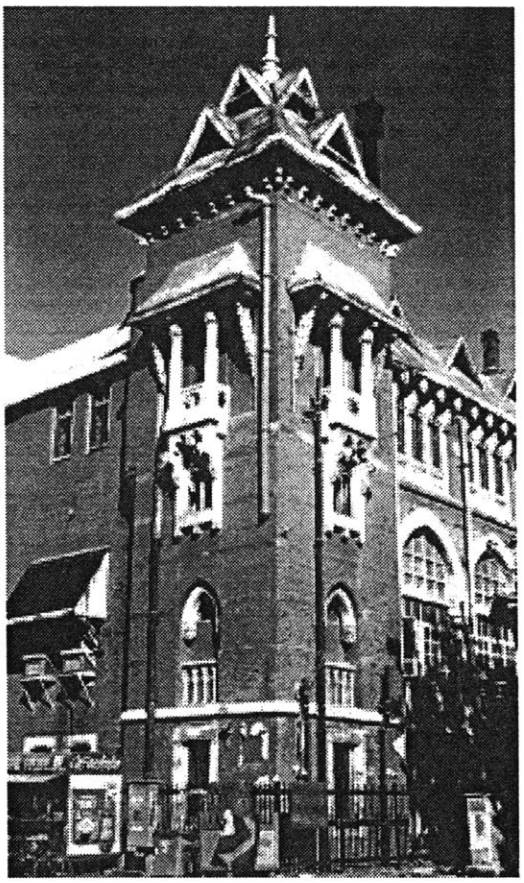
organized the administrative offices. The spatial organizing principles of axis and symmetry, a common feature of both European and Indian architecture (Hindu and Indo-Islamic), are prominent in the colonial buildings. Also, in an attempt to adapt the buildings to the climate, the British used the 'verandah,' an element of transition in local and regional houses (an integral part of the colonial bungalows), to great advantage. Thus, spatially, British colonial buildings in India were a solid mass of rooms surrounded by verandahs on all sides, punctuated by towers at the corners, which is a common feature of Indo-Islamic buildings (Fig. 16b).

The form of the building is linear with office and service areas organized around two courtyards. The building is symmetrical about the shorter E-W axis. The basic horizontality of the form, marked by the horizontal bands on the facade and the sloping roof, is punctuated by the vertical towers topped by steeply sloping roofs (cf. Figs. 2). The porch, or the point of entry is directly on the main street. The main hall is a column free space with the cast-iron trusses supported on cast-iron columns. The administrative areas organized around the two courtyards has an enclosed verandah-like narrow circulation corridor on either side of the offices, around the courtyard and on the exterior facade.

The formal principles were essentially of western origin, but the British incorporated Indian design forms, in an attempt to establish their buildings as a continuum to the Indian architectural tradition. The formal elements were imitated wholesale from the local and regional traditions and Hindu classical temple architecture as they best conveyed an overall impression of 'Indianness'. The Indians identified with the buildings due to the presence of familiar forms. This proved to be an important aspect in the evolution of the 'Indo-Saracenic' style. The formal elements of the Post and Telegraph Office are borrowed from, the classical Hindu temple architectural tradition (the porch with columns, brackets and overhang and, parapet motifs and screen panels), the Indo-Islamic tradition (tower and entrance arch) and the local and regional traditions (the roof, the balcony and the verandah), and assembled for a harmonious and balanced design.

The porch (Fig. 17a & b) is rectangular in plan with stone columns supporting a flat roof. The columns imitates the Dravidian style Hindu temple columns (Fig. 17c), and the brackets, the overhang and the balustrade with screens, also in stone, draw inspiration from the regional classical Hindu temples (Fig. 17d). Behind the porch is a tall arched





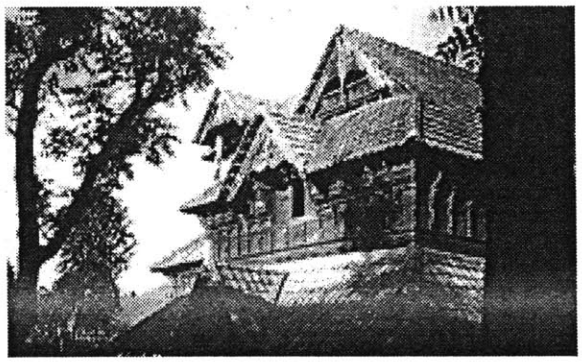


Fig. 18a & b Towers, Post and Telegraph Office, Madras, 1875-84, are a prominent feature of 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture and is assembled with elements borrowed from the local and regional tradition.

Fig. 18c Padmanabhapuram Palace, Trivandrum, 15-18th century displays the characteristic wooden slatted windows and steeply sloping roofs.

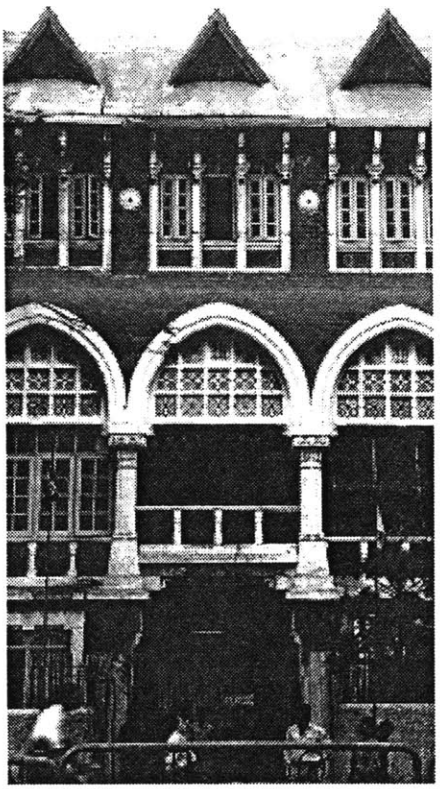


Fig. 19 Verandah, Post and Telegraph Office, Madras, 1875-84, is a feature borrowed from the colonial bungalows and is an effective climatic device, also seen in regional courtyard houses.

gateway which is a characteristic feature of Indo-Islamic architecture (Fig. 17e). The arched gateway has the characteristic 'chaitya' arch of Dravidian architecture (cf. Fig. 6) near the roof. The pointed arch with the timber windows and stone screens is flanked by two stone balconies which imitate details from the stone architecture of Rajasthan.

The towers (Fig. 18a & b) flanking the porch and marking the four corners of the building, are square in plan. The two towers, near the entrance, flanking the porch enclose a staircase. They are topped by a steeply sloping roofs, with timber rafters covered by tin sheets and not the traditional clay tiles. The dormer windows imitate the forms of the regional palaces (Fig. 18c), mosques and temples (cf. Fig. 8). The stone balcony on the tower with a sloping timber roof and carved balustrade is also borrowed from the wooden architectural tradition of the region. The wooden windows have louvers and brackets shaped like the slatted screen windows of regional architecture. The use of glass for the doors and windows and the cast-iron and glass openings of the main hall incorporate the contemporary modern developments and technology.

A verandah-like corridor (Fig. 19) surrounds the building which has a stone base, imitating the rusticated appearance of the western classical buildings (cf. Fig. 9). At the second floor level, the verandah is a colonnaded corridor with arched openings. The arch has stone screens which are effective climatic devices and a common feature of the Indo-Islamic architecture (cf. Fig. 17e). But the use of screens is also common to Hindu temples in the region. The stone columns and balustrade imitate the details of Hindu temple architecture. At the third floor level, the verandah is enclosed by wooden and glass windows with an overhanging sloping roof supported on brackets shaped like the slatted windows of regional architecture. The roof is constructed of timber but covered by corrugated tin sheets. The dormer windows are a prominent feature of the regional wooden architecture (cf. Figs. 18c).

The main hall (cf. Figs. 15 & 16a) has three bays which have a cast-iron trussed roof supported on cast-iron columns. The arched openings towards the courtyard are enclosed by cast-iron and glass windows. The clerestory windows are top hung and made of cast-iron and glass. The roof is covered by a tin roof without the traditional clay tiles. At either end of the central bay of the hall is a grand staircase. The back stair exits on to a small street, which runs all around the building.

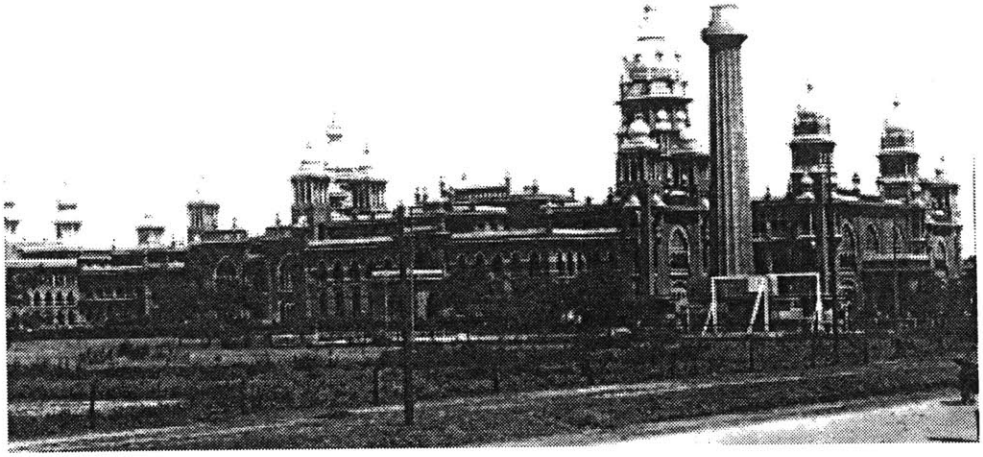


Fig. 20 Law Court, Madras, 1889-92 displaying the characteristic features of Indo-Islamic architetcure.

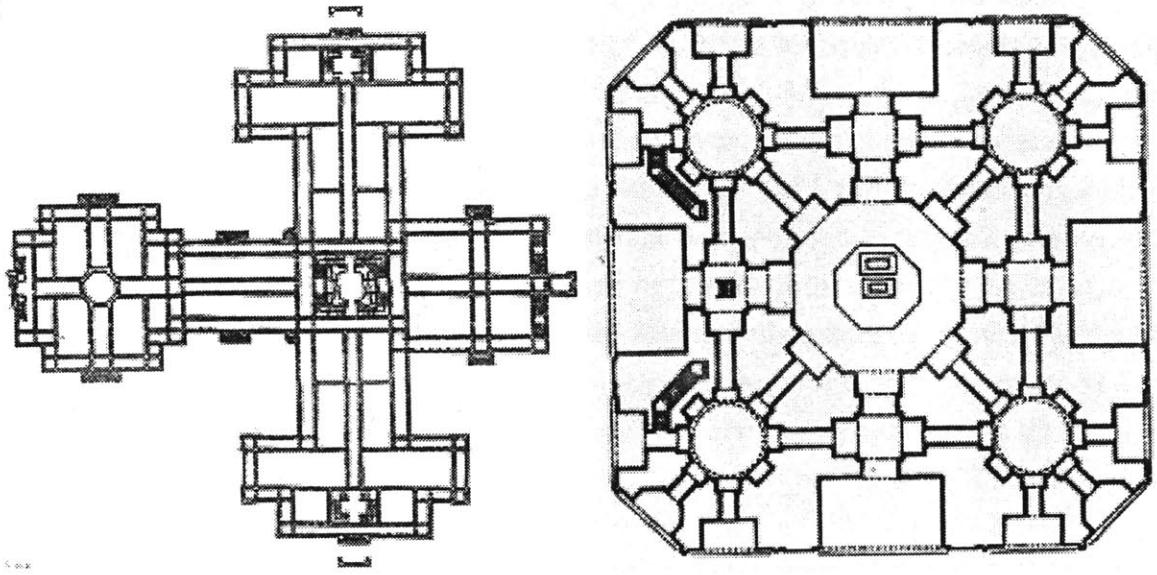


Fig. 21a Plan, Law Court, Madras, 1889-92 with the Small Causes Court displaying the centered plan of n Indo-Islamic tomb or mosque.

Fig. 21b Plan, Taj Mahal, Agra, 1630-52 with the centered symmetrical plan.

Indian craftsmen were an integral part of the construction process of the Post and Telegraph Office and the constructional aspects were very clearly a response to the debate of 1873, which sought to better the status of the traditional craftsmen. The British architects had come to understand that whatever the design, it was finally the skilled craftsmen who would help realize the design. Their essential strategy was to dress European buildings in Indian garb. The use of forms, details and stylistic motifs from classical Hindu temple architecture of the region (cf. Fig. 6) and regional wooden architecture (cf. Fig. 8) is a reflection of the employment of local craftsmen for the construction of the building. The use of local materials and techniques had been a part of the colonial construction process since their earliest projects, but the direct use of forms and stylistic motifs is a characteristic feature of the 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings. The exterior of the buildings were almost always constructed out of traditional materials, employing traditional forms, stylistic motifs and traditional craftsmen. But the interior reflected the latest developments in construction technology. The use of cast-iron, reinforced concrete and steel for the structure of the buildings, and a exterior made of traditional materials with traditional elements, is a characteristic feature of colonial buildings, not only in India, but many parts of the colonized world at the turn of the century.

The Law Court, 1889-92

The design for the Law Court, Madras, 1889-92 was begun by the architect Robert F. Chisholm and completed by Henry Irwin, his successor as Chief Architect of Madras Presidency.[29] This buildings reflects the overt use of Indo-Islamic imagery at the end of the 19th century. This was an effort to generate an universal language of architecture for all of India, and the use of regional forms and stylistic motifs was considered inappropriate.

It is located to the North of the fort St. George, at the intersection of the First Line Beach Road and the Esplanade (now called the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Road after the famous freedom fighter from Bengal in eastern India). It is a few blocks to the South of the

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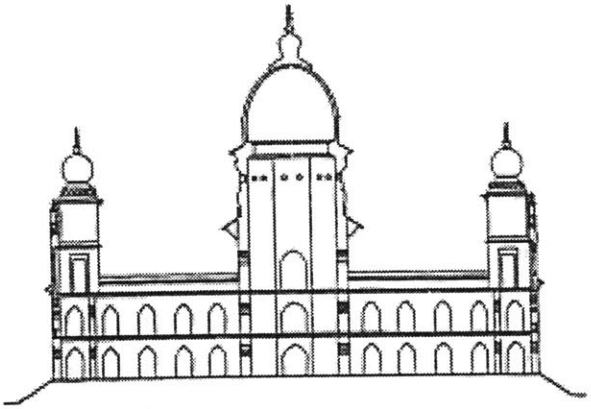
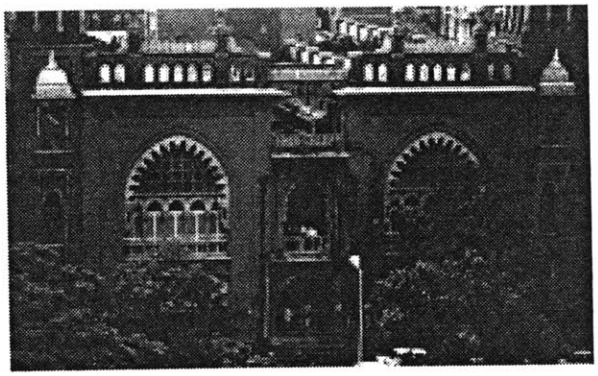
29 Chisholm left for Baroda, western India, in 1889 as the Consulting Architect to the Maharaja of Baroda, a post that he occupied until 1902. He went there to complete the palace for the Maharaja left incomplete after the death of Charles Mant, another great exponent of Indo-Saracenic style. In Baroda he designed the New College, 1881-3 and the Museum, 1892-4. He left for England in 1902 and established an architectural firm at 10 John Street, Adelphi, London. His chief works there were the Christian Science Church, 1903 and a proposal for an Indian Museum on the Thames, which was never constructed. He retired from practice in 1912 and died in 1915. See "Obituaries" in Builder (v108, 4 June 1915) p. 528 and Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects (v22, 1915) p. 404, 427.





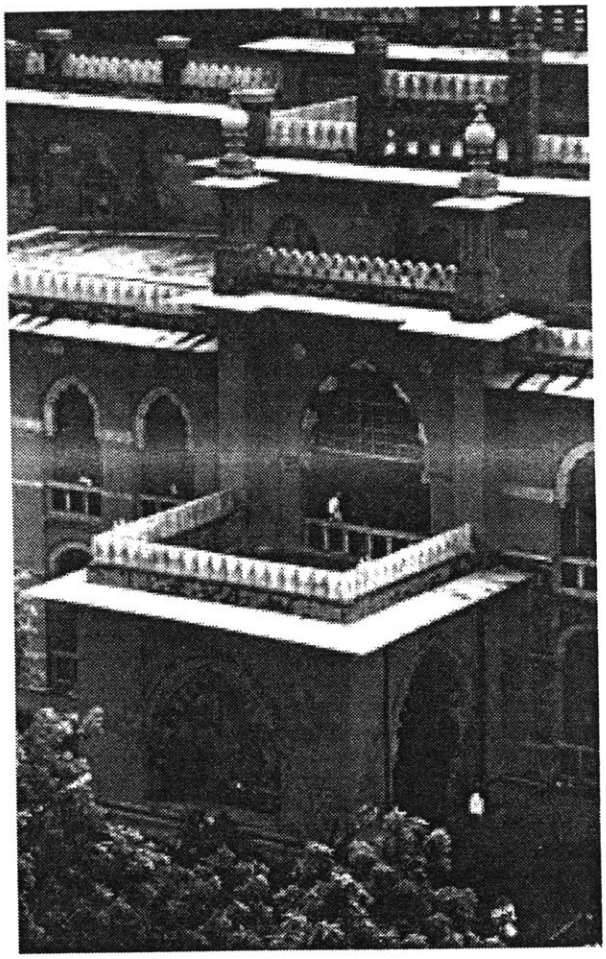


Fig. 22 Section, Law Court, Madras, 1889-92 with the characteristic central dome flanked by turrets, as seen in Indo-Islamic monuments.

Fig. 23a Porch, Law Court, Madras, 1889-92 with a arched entry way and imitating the colonial bungalows in the area.

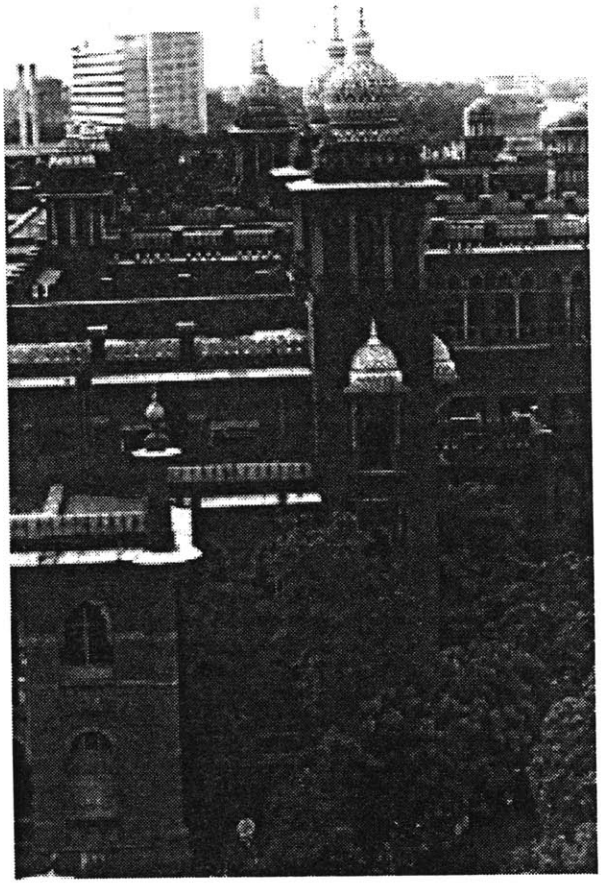
Fig. 23b Screen Arch behind the porch, Law Court, Madras, 1889-92 imitating the Indo-Islamic monuments.

Post and Telegraph Office and near the harbor. The building sits in a garden with a compound wall all around it. To its West is the Law College built in 1896. The building has three entrance porches, one each on the East, North and South side. The entrance to the East is for the exclusive use of the judges and is from the First Line Beach Road, facing the sea. The other entrance is from the N. S. C. Bose Road to the North. The porch to the South acts as a subsidiary entrance to the complex.

In its siting, the placing of building in landscape (Fig. 20), was a common feature of the English manor houses and the bungalows in Madras, which were generally set back from the street in a garden. The University Senate House, 1874-8 sits in a garden with its long facade towards the sea (cf. Fig. 33). Thus, its position in landscape is a curious synthesis of western and regional attitudes. In the Indo-Islamic context, buildings either stood at one end of an axis or at the focus or intersection of two axii (Taj Mahal, Agra; Humayun's Tomb, Delhi) and a defined garden around it. In the Hindu tradition, the South Indian temples were symmetrically disposed along a axis. The Law Court differs from the Indo-Islamic buildings in that its periphery is not formally defined or delimited, and the garden is not formally laid out. Its orientation along the sea, symmetrically along axis the E-W direction does not reflect any direct response to climatic considerations, rather it is primarily concerned with the making of the promenade along the sea.

In its plan the Law Court (Fig. 21a) is a symmetrical building, axially laid out along the E-W axis. To its West is the square, symmetrical, Small Causes Court, connected to the main building by means of a central corridor and a verandah all around its exterior. At the intersection of the cross-axis of the Small Causes Court is a small domed, octagonal space. In its plan it resembles the Indo-Islamic tombs and mosques (Fig. 21b). The main building consists of court rooms and administrative offices with a circulation verandah all around it and a corridor in the center. At the intersection of the cross-axis of the main building is a square space topped by a big dome and a grand staircase around it. The North and South porches lead to the central corridor, via a lobby flanked by staircases.

The plan of the building consists of spaces organized symmetrically, along two axii, with verandahs on the exterior facade and wrapping all around the building. The axial plan is similar to the Government Houses built in the early 18th century. The symmetrical plan also resembles the public buildings in Bombay and Calcutta with the characteristic verandah



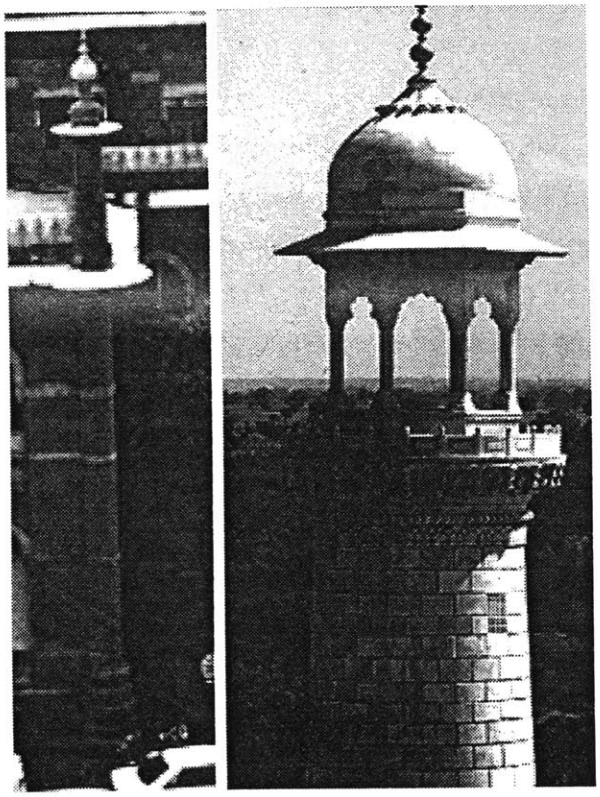


Fig. 24 Towers, Law Court, Madras, 1889-92 with the characteristic dome of many Islamic minarets. The tower was an important feature of 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings.

Fig. 25a Turrets, Law Court, Madras, 1889-92 resembling the minarets of Islamic mosques and tombs.

Fig. 25b Turret, Taj Mahal, Agra, 1630-52 with the ovrhangs, brackets and domed top.

all around it. The axial and symmetrical layout is also a common feature of Indo-Islamic complexes.

In its Spatial principles the Law Court is a solid mass of court rooms and administrative office spaces surrounded by a verandah on the exterior facade (Fig. 22). The corners of the building are anchored by domed towers and turrets while the entrance is marked by a porch and screen covered entrance arch. At its center is a corridor, and the intersection of the corridors is marked by a huge dome. The verandahs and corridors along with the stairs in the lobby or intersection areas act as circulation spaces. Spatially, the building follows the colonial precedent of a solid mass wrapped in a verandah. Its precedents are the public buildings in Bombay and Madras. It is similar to the Post and Telegraph Office, Madras, except that the towers do not enclose the areas of vertical towers. In its cross-section it resembles the Indo-Islamic mosques and tombs, with a central dome flanked by towers (cf. Fig 16b).

The form of the building is dominating and regular with verandahs all around its exterior facade. The entrances are marked by porches and lead to the central corridor via a lobby, around which are organized the areas of vertical traverse. The linearity of the building is punctuated by towers and turrets at the corners, which emphasize the verticality of the building. The domes at the intersections of the cross-axii of the main building and the Small Causes Court soar up to the sky and makes for a dynamic and impressive skyline.

The form of the building makes direct references to the Indo-Islamic traditions. The entrances are flanked by towers and turrets and imitate the entrances to Indo-Islamic complexes (cf. Figs. 17e & 16b). The various elements of the building like, the porch, entrance arch, the domed towers and turrets, and the main domes, make direct references to the Indo-Islamic tradition in its formal principles. The use of the verandah, as a climatic device, which wraps around the building is a prominent feature as seen in the Post and Telegraph Office, Madras and colonial buildings in Bombay. The parts or elements are assembled symmetrically, like in the Indo-Islamic tombs and mosques.

The brick porch (Fig. 23a) is a flat roofed cube with arched openings, brackets, overhang and crenellated railing in stone. The porch was an integral feature of colonial design. The pointed arch form imitates the Indo-Islamic features unlike the porch of the

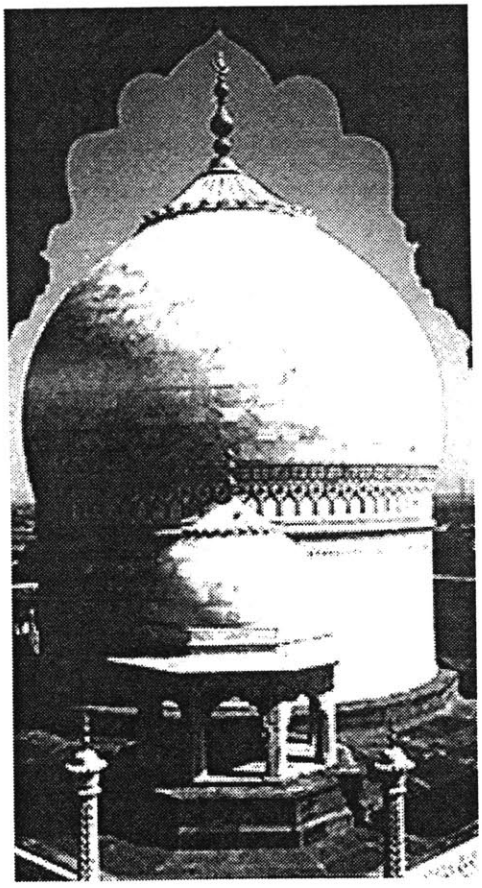


Fig. 26a & b Domes, Law Court, Madras, 1889-92 with the forms imitating the dome of the Indo-Islamic monuments. The balconies stuck on its surface borrow from the classical tradition of Hindu temple architetcure.

Fig. 26c Dome, Taj Mahal, Agra, 1630-52.

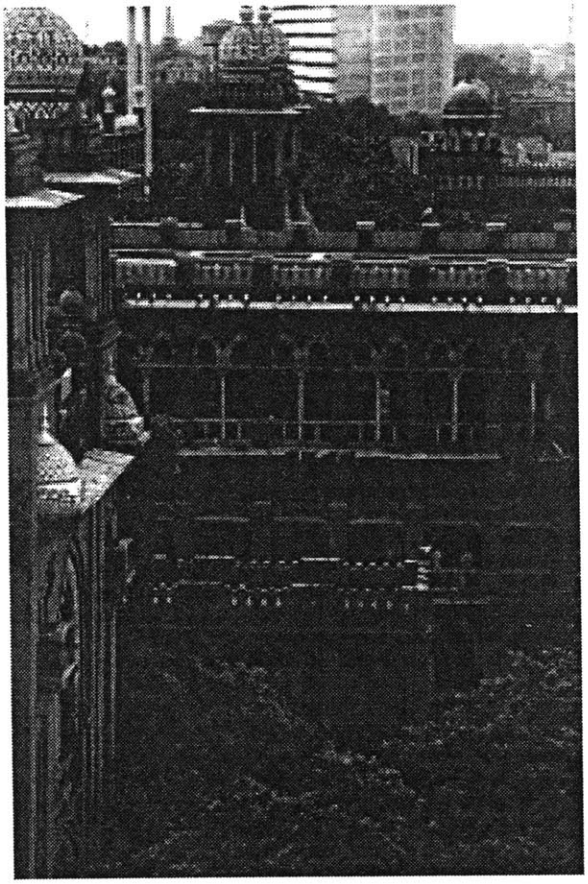
Post and Telegraph Office which imitates details from the Hindu temple architecture. The stone details of the brackets, overhang and parapet imitate the wooden construction of the region. Behind the porch is a 'jali' (screen) covered arch (Fig. 23b) which imitates the intricate screen arch in the Indo-Islamic mosques and tombs (cf. Fig. 17e).

The towers that punctuate the corners of the building are of two types, one is slender topped by a small dome while the other is broader and topped by a larger dome (Fig. 24). Both types of towers have arched openings at the lower level and a half domed balcony at the upper level. The towers were an integral feature of 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings from early times. The turrets which flank the entrance porch and arch (Fig. 25a), imitate the minarets of Indo-Islamic complexes (Fig. 25b). The relief work on the main domes imitate the ceramic tile work and are painted in white and red wash.

The two domes (Fig. 26a & b) occur at the intersection of the cross-axis of the complex. This resembles the Indo-Islamic mosques and tombs (cf. Fig. 16b). The shape and form of the dome draws direct inspiration from the dome of the Taj Mahal, Agra (Fig. 26c) and other Indo-Islamic mosques and tombs. The small balcony like features on the dome are borrowed from the regional classical temple architectural tradition, and stuck on the surface of the dome (cf. Fig. 6).

The verandah (Fig. 27a & b) with its arched openings, was an effective climatic device, and was an element that the British used extensively in their bungalows and public buildings. The Victorian gothic buildings of Bombay (Fig. 27c) use this element very effectively. The arched openings of the court, imitates the arched verandahs of Indo-Islamic monuments. The flat roof with the crenellated balustrades and small turrets are characteristic Indo-Islamic features which were originally borrowed from the Rajput forts and palaces.

The construction and stylistic aspects of the Law Court are firmly rooted in the Indo-Islamic tradition. And not only the forms and motifs are borrowed from the tradition but the role of the traditional craftsmen is similar. The building is constructed out of brick with stone arches, overhangs and brackets, crenellated balustrades and railings, columns on the domes and the screens are made of stone. In the construction of the buildings, the British architects were concerned with the impression conveyed by these buildings and the



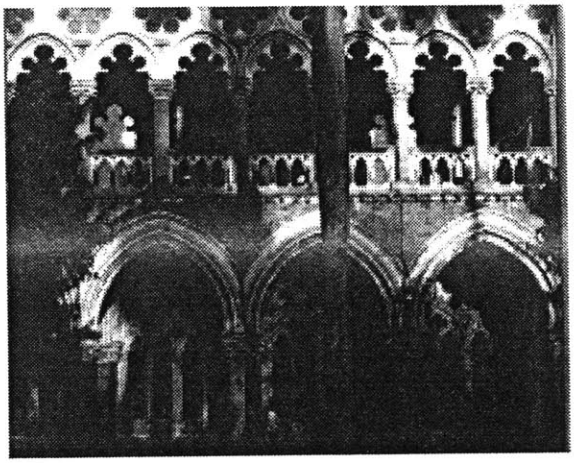


Fig. 27a & b Verandah, Law Court, Madras, 1889-92 with the arched openings resembling the Victorian gothic buildings of Bombay.

Fig. 27c University library, Bombay with the characteristic verandah wrapping around the building and the arched openings.

role of the craftsmen who would actually construct the buildings. And hence, great attention was given to the constructional and stylistic aspects. A domed entrance pavilion is a common feature of Indo-Islamic mosques and was innovatively used as a 'porte-cochere' in colonial bungalows and palaces built by colonial architects for Indian princes. This element was employed by Chisholm to a very large extent, as seen in the Public Works Department Headquarters, Madras, 1864 and the Nilgiri Library, Ootacamand, 1865. The tower, as I have already mentioned, was a common feature of European churches and Indo-Islamic complexes, and was adapted to colonial buildings. The domed turrets are definitely an Indo-Islamic feature common to tombs and mosques, and also of Rajput fort entrance gates.

While the overall ensemble gives a vague sense of being Indian, the individual elements, hand-crafted by the local skilled craftsman, show a decided influence, even direct application, of vernacular, local and regional design forms. Here is the quintessential craftsman left free (?) to 'render ornate' surfaces of buildings. The column capital with motifs from Hindu temples, the brackets, overhang and the roof imitating wooden architecture of the region and the parapet detail and the domed turrets reminiscent of Indo-Islamic forts, are testimony to the eclectic selection process of design forms, often not restricted to any historical period or time, which is the leitmotif of the period in Britain.

Eclecticism and the Traditional Indian Craftsman

In order to understand the constraints within which the colonial architects operated, it would be important to have a general picture of the 'British-Indian' architecture in the last quarter of the 19th century and the political environment of the time that generated the responses for a context-sensitive architecture. The projects of Robert F. Chisholm (1838-1915)[30] in Madras are a good example of the influence of the electic and revivalist attitude towards architecture prevalent in Britain at this time, on the design decisions of the British architects in India.

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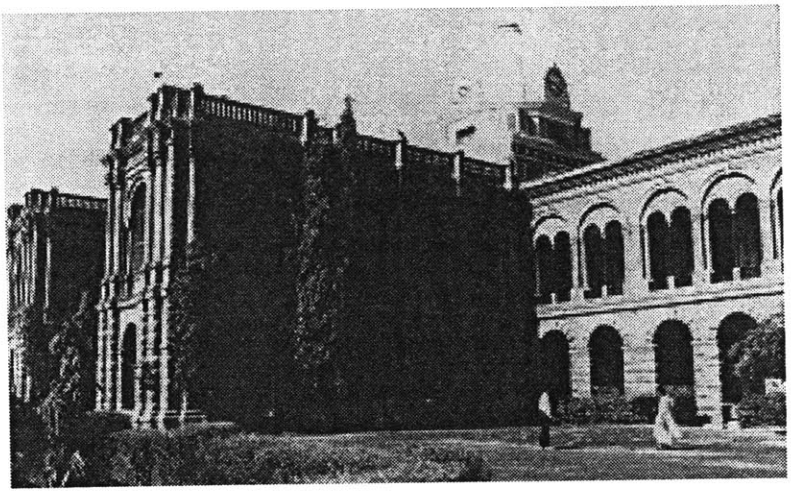
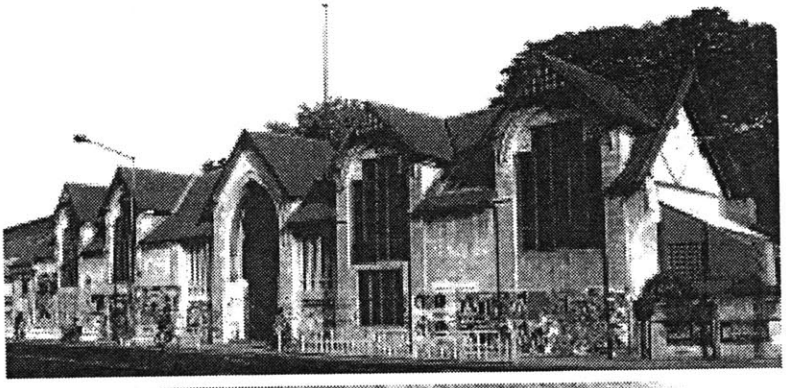
30 Chisholm came to Madras in 1864, in response to the announcement of a competition for the design of the buildings for the Presidency College and the University Senate House. He won the competition and a year later was appointed the consulting architect to the Government of Madras. He also took position as the head of the School of Industrial Art which was founded in 1855. He instituted the Drawing and Painting Academy which grew into the School of Fine Arts. See Philip Davies, Splendours of the Raj: British Architecture in India 1660-1947 (London: John Murray Ltd., 1985) and Thomas R. Metcalf (1989) p. 67-9.





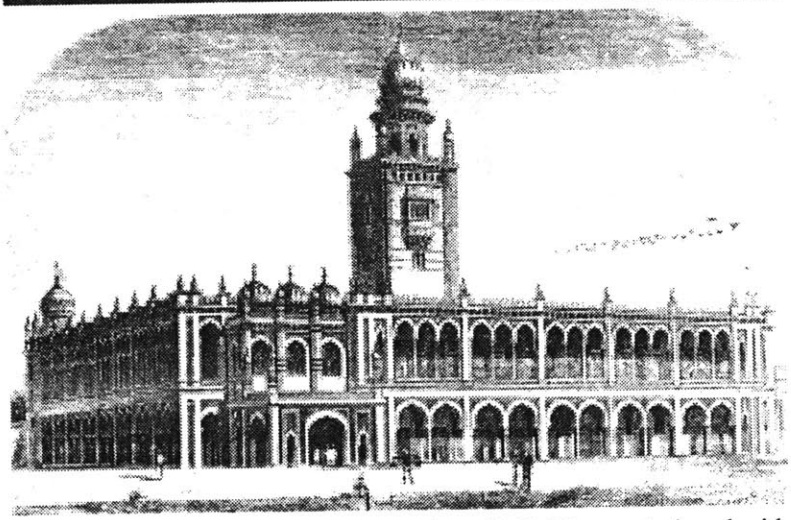


Fig. 28 The Presidency College, Madras, 1867-70, was designed with forms and motifs borrowed mostly from western sources, and reflects the eclectic attitude of the designers at that time.

Fig. 29 The Government College of Arts and Crafts, Madras, is an experiment with Gothic architecture, as eclecticism was the leitmotif of the period and Chisholm was very much an architect of his time.

Fig. 30 Board of Revenue Offices, Madras, 1866, with the characteristic tower, which became a prominent feature of the 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings, added for picturesque reasons.

Hybrid styles and amalgams were the idiom of this time in Europe and majority of the building work reflected this attitude in late 19th century India. Eclecticism was the leitmotif of the period and attempts at fusing regional styles with the European historic precedent were common. Chisholm's career spans a time period when the 'Battle of Styles' in England and the 'Dilemma of Style' in India were the most discussed issues. The use of historical styles was not confined to India. During this time and for some time before this, Gothic Revival was the mode of time in Europe, as is seen in the works of Sir George Gilbert Scott and Alfred Waterhouse, who redeployed the styles of medieval Europe for modern purposes. However thorough in their study of the sources, and authenticity of the revival, these designs were adaptations in which elements or parts of the historical style were re-assembled into a new language. In the early 18th century, the revival of Greek and Roman forms were dominant, as was a fleeting fascination with Indian styles (Royal Pavilion, Brighton, 1815-18). Thus, whether as long term movements or passing fashions, the use of historical styles was a constant feature of the British architectural design. Through the projects of Robert Chisholm, I would like to exemplify this attitude of eclecticism prevalent in the last quarter of the 19th century.

Chisholm's earliest works, the Public Works Department Headquarters, 1864-8 and the Presidency College (Fig. 28), 1867-70 are basically European buildings, using as its sources classical western architecture, with minor modifications for climate and materials. While his design for the Nilgiri Library, Ootacamand, a hill station near Bangalore, 1865 and the gothic style Government Arts and Crafts College, (Fig. 29) Madras in 1865, shows the influence of Gothic, Romanesque and Byzantine styles.

The transformation of the Chepauk Palace into Offices for the Revenue Board (Fig. 30), 1866-71, by a process of alteration and addition shows the free use of local and regional design forms and details. Here, the free and eclectic use of Indian forms and motifs reflects the attitudes in Europe. Chisholm's one original contribution to the design was a red and white, horizontally striped tower, with domed corner spires, a massive parapet and a crowning onion dome. The tower introduced for picturesque reasons became a distinctive feature of 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture, integrating and harmonizing Indian and European design forms. This is a good example of the continued influence of the attitude of the picturesque painters of the late 18th and 19th centuries, and which was the

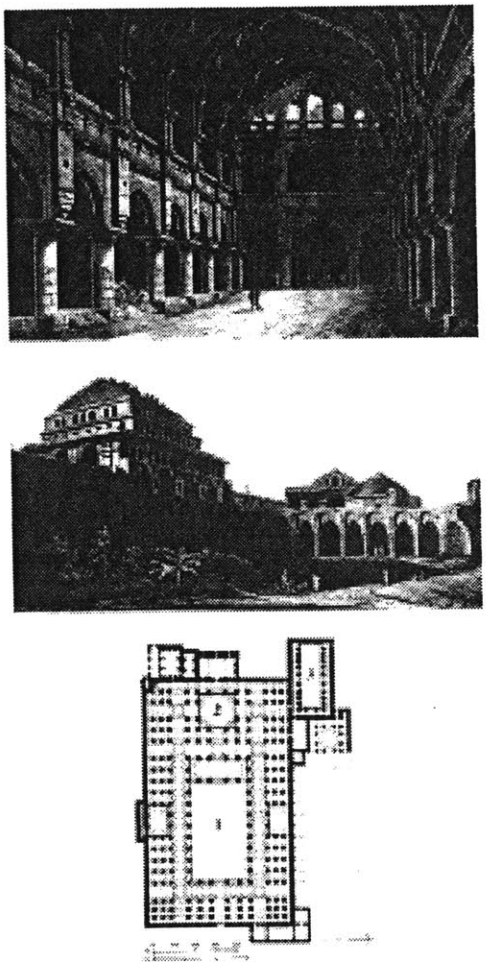


Fig. 31 The exterior of the 17th century palace of Tirumalai Nayak, Madurai, shows the rising vault of the Durbar Hall on the left and the interior view depicts the Dance Hall before its restoration by Chisholm in the 19th century.

Fig. 32 The Napier Museum, Trivandrum, 1872 was one of the first of Chisholm's designs to employ forms and motifs from the local and regional tradition.

aesthetic theory underlying most building and landscape projects built in England at this time.

After traveling in the region and having to deal with local craftsmen and techniques, his later works show a marked change in his design attitude, and his designs are first steps towards the maturation of the 'Indo-Saracenic' style. He traveled to Travancore (present day Kerala state) and Madurai, and was profoundly influenced by the buildings he saw there (Fig. 31). In 1869, Chisholm was entrusted the task of restoring the 17th century palace of Tirumalai Nayak in Madurai.[31] Visiting the palace, he felt that there were distinct 'Hindu' and 'Saracenic' styles which the builders had not attempted to keep separate or pure, but the design forms and elements were adapted and modified to suit their purpose and taste. This must, surely have influenced and inspired him, as, from this point onwards his work shows a greater use of local and regional design forms and elements. Chisholm's classification of Indian architecture into 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' was fashioned by the views held by the historians at that time, especially James Fergusson's "The History of Indian and Far Eastern Architecture," published in 1876 wherein despite being aware of the importance of regional styles, Fergusson is trapped by the assumptions underlying the communal categories[32] and characterizes architecture as Jain, Buddhist, Hindu and 'Saracenic.'

In 1872, soon after visiting Madurai, Chisholm was commissioned to design the Napier Museum (Fig. 32) in Trivandrum. He rejected the fashionable gothic style and derived inspiration from local images. He also visited Padmanabhapuram and was inspired by its roof forms and projecting eaves, brackets and balconies— features which he incorporated in this design and later work. It is noteworthy that Chisholm was doing this

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31 R. F. Chisholm, "The Restoration of the Palace of Tirumalai Naik" in Transactions of the Royal Institute of British Architects (v26, 1875-76) p. 159-78.

32 Although, later Fergusson recognized the simplification that such classification entails and in a lecture given to the Royal Society of Arts entitled, "On the Study of Indian Architecture," he says that " I learnt that there was not only one Hindu and one Mohammedan style in India, but several species of class; that these occupied well-defined local provinces, and belonged each to ascertained ethnological divisions of the people." Reprinted in James Fergusson, On the Study of Indian Architecture (Varanasi, 1977), p. 5-6. However, it was not long before historians were casually writing about two fundamentally different architectures in India, each identified with a religious community. See Banister Fletcher, History of World Architecture on the Comparative Method. (London, 1899). For a critique on James Fergusson and Indian historiography, see Sonit Bafna, The 19th Century Discourse on Indian Architecture, Masters Thesis, (MIT, 1993).

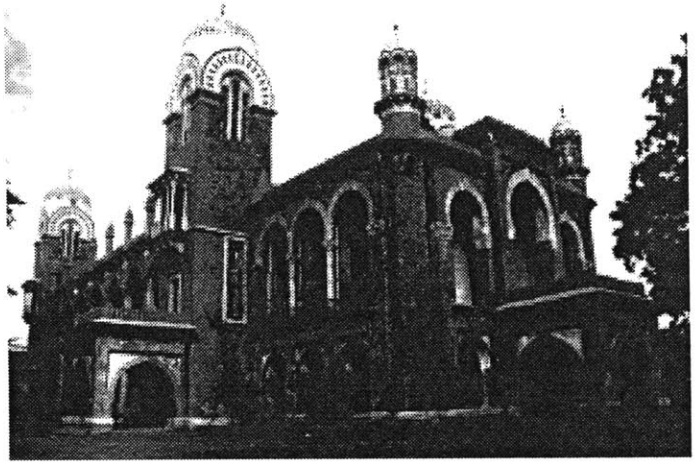

Fig. 33 The University Senate House, Madras, 1874-8, employed forms and motifs eclectically selected from various periods, while using details from the classical temple tradition of the region.

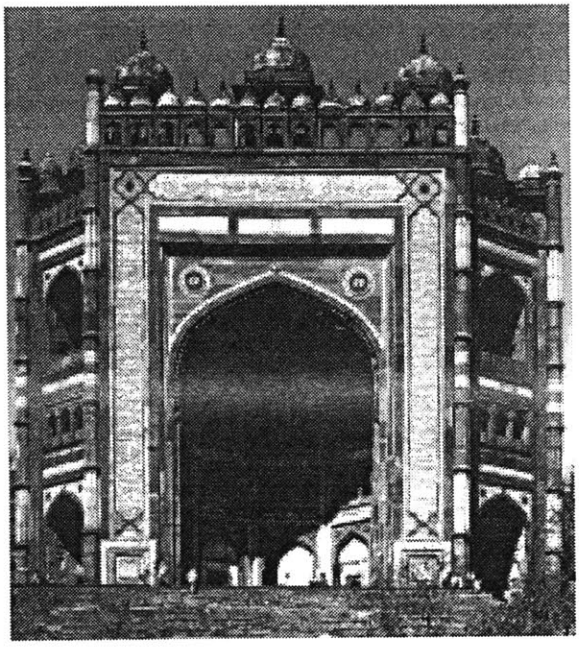

Fig. 34aThe National Art Gallery, Madras, 1907, is faced in pink sandstone like the buildings of the Mughals in Delhi, Agra & Fatehpur Sikri. The main entrance facade is modeled on the Buland Darwaza at Fatehpur Sikri.

Fig. 34b The Buland Darwaza, in the palace complex at Fatehpur Sikri, is a monumental gateway built to commemorate the conquest of the Deccan. It is a secular building which guards the empire's conquests and exalts the king's glory.

work before the great debate of 1873, between adaptation and assimilation. His views and tastes were informed by the local and regional conditions, materials, techniques and craftsmanship.

The University Senate House, Madras, 1874-9 (Fig. 33) was also an assemblage of forms and motifs borrowed eclectically from the western and classical Hindu temple traditions. It reflects the random selection of forms and motifs that characterized the work of architects in Europe at this time. The building is essentially western with minor details borrowed directly from the Hindu classical temple tradition. The Post and Telegraph Office, Madras, 1875-84, begun only a year after the University Senate House, borrows forms and motifs primarily from the local and regional traditions. In this building, the palace architecture of the region is the source for the design. But minor details like the stone columns of the porch, brackets and overhangs, and the balustrade replicate the details of Hindu temple architecture. Thus, the selection of forms does not seem to follow any pattern but is rather random. This attitude is not peculiar only to these 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings but buildings in Europe at this time also reflected this eclectic, stylistic attitude.

Most buildings in Madras in the early 20th century were the official Public Works Department and government preferred characteristically red washed brick buildings with 'Indo-Saracenic' features. Despite the persistence of 'Indo-Saracenic' in Madras, and most colonial presidency towns and princely states, in the early 20th century, there is a fine point of distinction between the attitude of the 19th and 20th centuries. While most buildings of the last quarter of the 19th century may be seen as an attempt to create a regional expression which employed regional architectural precedents to make an architecture of its time and place, some buildings at the turn of the century employed an overtly Mughal expression from Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri,[33] which may be seen as an attempt to create a unified 'Indo-Saracenic' expression for all of India.

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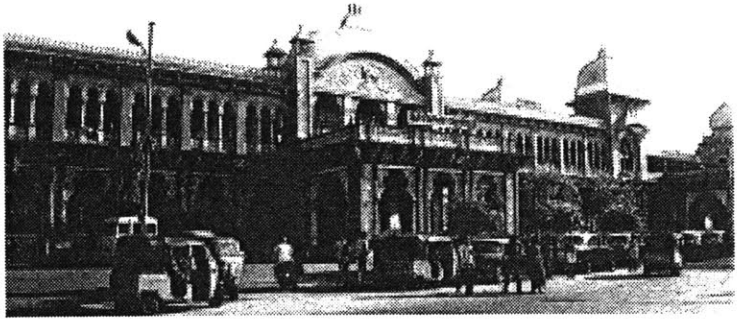
[33] The practice of studying Fatehpur Sikri as a mixture of Hindu and Islamic styles, is too simplistic to define the profusion of styles in this palace complex. Refer "Akbar and Fatehpur Sikri" in Marg (v38 #2,1986). Its eclecticism can be attributed to the formative character of the Mughal court, the ruler's (Akbar's) patronization of experimentation in the arts, and his enchantment with his Timurid ancestry. Some critics have also suggested that the British projection of Fatehpur Sikri as a representation of Akbar's religious tolerance was politically motivated and its purpose was to legitimate the British rule over India. Refer T. Metcalf The Imperial Vision... (1989).



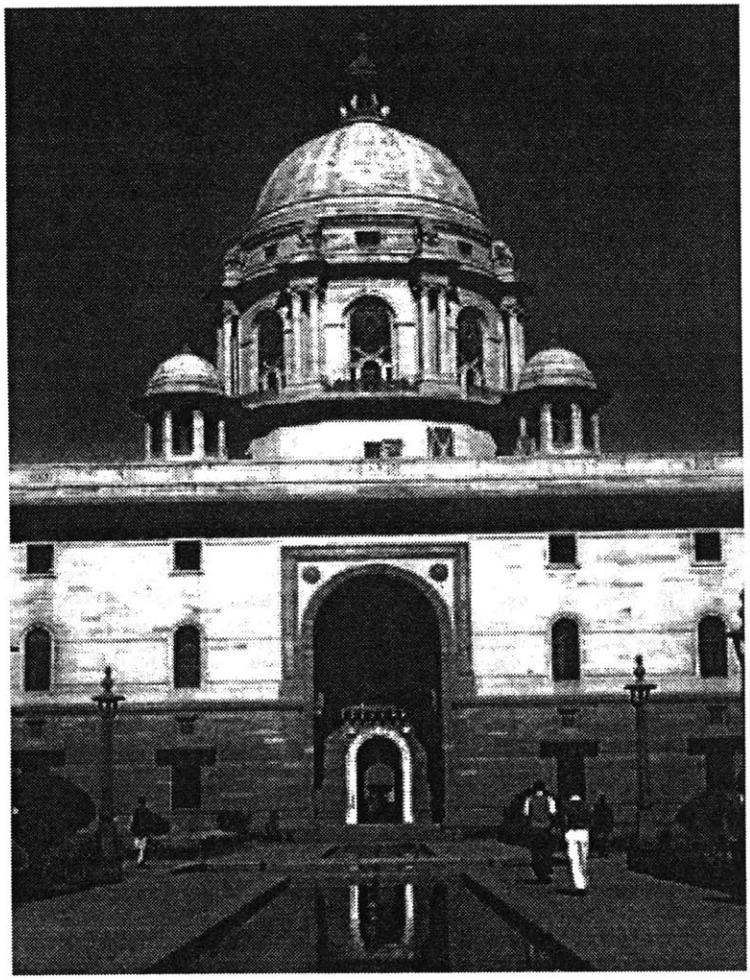


Fig. 35 The Headquarters of the Southern Railways, an example of late "Indo-Saracenic" architecture, was completed in 1922 and resembles the stone palaces of Mysore.

Fig. 36 The Egmore Railway Station is an eclectic mixture of styles from North India, especially Rajasthan, and reflects the changing aspects of the 'Indo-Saracenic' in the 20th century.

Fig. 37 The Secretariat, New Delhi by Herbert Baker is essentially classical in form, and incorporated Indian decorative elements such as carved screens, or jalis, and small domed kiosks called chattris, borrowed from mainly the Mughal tradition.

Into the second category falls the Law Court (cf. Fig. 3), 1889-92 and the National Art Gallery (Fig. 34a), built in 1907 and designed by Henry Irwin. The Law Court was a brick building, like the other 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings in the city but its imagery was borrowed from the Indo-Islamic tradition which was the language of the imperial Mughals. The National Art Gallery was designed as the Victoria Memorial Hall and Technical Institute founded in 1887 to promote local handicrafts. It was converted into a national gallery in 1951. It is a building faced in pink sandstone, unlike other public buildings of Madras which used brick (stone, sparingly) and its entrance is modeled on the Buland Darwaza (Fig. 34b) at Fatehpur Sikri. Why is it that for the law court and a building intended to house local craftsmen and to exhibit their products, Mughal architectural precedents, rather than regional styles were employed? This could be attributed to a change in the political attitude of the British, who, not so sure of their position in their largest colony (due to rising nationalist sentiments) sought to create a universal architectural expression for all of India, and chose Indo-Islamic motifs over regional traditions to establish themselves as legitimate successors to the Mughal empire.

Another example is the building for the Southern Railways Headquarters (Fig. 35), completed in 1922. It is built out of gray stone by a building contractor T. Samynada Pillai. The use of stone as a building material for public buildings is unusual in Madras at this time. But, the construction of buildings in New Delhi, designed by Lutyen and Baker, were underway and may have influenced the attitude of the designers. Also, the use of Indo-Islamic and classical Hindu temple architectural forms and motifs, perhaps also hints at the transition occurring in the architectural profession at this time. The projects were built by local building contractors, who surely employed local skilled craftsmen, which would account for the continued use of classical Hindu temple architecture details. The Egmore Railway Station (Fig. 36), built around the mid 1920s, by the building contractor T. Samynada Pillai, displays influence of Jaipur and Fatehpur Sikri architecture. Such an attitude of eclectic selection of architectural forms, which was the leitmotif of late 19th century architecture, seems to have persisted in Madras, and in India in general, well into the 1930s.

The imperial Government complex in New Delhi (Fig. 37), completed between 1913-30, epitomized the late 'Indo-Saracenic' style. For Edwin Lutyen and Herbert Baker, architecture was an universal craft, rationally adapted to regional contexts. They had hoped

that the construction of New Delhi would provide the much needed impetus to the active participation of Indian craftsmen in the process of design and construction. But the situation did not change, as soon after the completion of New Delhi, the increased activism of the nationalist movements demanded a independent nation, and the progressive attitude of national leaders like Nehru, who seeking to pull India out of backwardness, chose Modern architecture over indigenous traditions and set the tone for the role of craftsmen in Indian buildings.

In mid-1930s, the firm of S. L. Chitale & Son, were involved in renovation the National Insurance Corporation Building, Madras. In 1931 was built the Madras Christian College, which sits in a garden compound much in the tradition of 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings. But this seems to have been the first building to employ the usual climatic devices like the verandah, overhanging roof etc. without the stylistic embellishments. In a similar trend, the extension to the Madras University, 1936 reflects the influence of the architecture of New Delhi and increasing effort on part of the British to create a singular idiom for all of India. But in an overall picture, little seems to have changed in Madras, and on the occasion of the Madras Tercentenary Celebrations in 1939, it was noted that, "...the scenes around the city's temples, tanks and squares are still the same as those witnessed in distant days,..."[34] This observation is correct to a very large extent but implicit in it is a denial of the influence of colonial architecture and effects of industrialization. There seems to be some effort to establish the continuity of the Indian architectural traditions as timeless and unchanging, much in the same way as Fergusson and Havell, who urged the revival of the arts and crafts and by promoting the traditional skills and hoped to restore India to its former glory and golden past.

While the eclecticism in England, at this time, was an expression of 'British' identity as posited against the European one The 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture may be seen as an attempt to define an 'British-Indian' identity versus the western one. And an syncretic assemblage of parts from the various Indian sources combined with western precedents would have been the ideal solution. Thus the attitude of random selection of forms from any historical period was not restricted to Europe or India, but was the mode of the time and architects all over the world, followed this eclectic stylistic attitude.

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[34] S. Muthiah, Madras Discovered... (1981) p. 163.

The Debate of 1873: Dilemma of Style

Ironically, the revolt of 1857 strengthened the hold of the British on India and gave them a new strategic, commercial and cultural cohesion. The nature of the representation of imperial ideology was full of paradoxes and in 1873 there ensued a debate regarding the 'style' or mode of building for British India.

On one hand, the British, conquerors and masters of a world empire, demanded the creation of a unified architectural image all over the globe and the aesthetic imperialists argued for an expression of 'universalism.' T. Roger Smith, a staunch imperialist, was in favor of this interpretation, advocating the use of a "national British style" basing his arguments on the precedent set by "the Romans and Mohammedans....Our building ought to hold up a high standard of European art. They ought to be European...."[35] The imperialists argued that the British should seek to emulate Romans and along with British law, order, justice and culture, impose British architecture aimed at glorification of the empire.

On the other hand, the revivalists argued that the empire possessed no actual unity or project any consistent political ideology. The British 'Raj' therefore, demanded an architecture expressive of 'regionalism' rooted in the local context. Such a proposition found support among many revivalists including John Lockwood Kipling, James Fergusson and Sir George Birdwood, who were not in favor of mechanized, universal expression as it led to uniformity and standardization. They were of the view that the architecture of the 'Raj' should be expressive of the uninterrupted living traditions of India, linking the past and the present. With a wish to imply that the British were a part of the Indian milieu, 'hybrid' styles evolved to express this synthesis. The British began to consciously incorporate Indian elements into their buildings and evolve an expression appropriate to their new image, rooted in the Indian context.

The debate was to continue unabated until the early part of the 20th century, but William Emerson, an architect and pioneer for the creation of a homogenous architectural style for empire in India rooted in the Mughal tradition, called for a third way. He believed that the British should not bring into India a new style but follow the example of the

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35 T. Roger Smith, "Architectural Art of India" in Journal of the Royal Society of Arts (1873) p. 278-87.

supplanted Mughal conquerors who "...seized upon the art indigenous to the conquered countries, adapting it to suit their own needs and ideas."[36] By the end of the 19th century, such an attitude was to find firm supporters and was carried into the 20th century by Lutyens and Baker for their design of the buildings in New Delhi. While Chisholm had drawn from precedents in his immediate context, the design of New Delhi was an attempt to create a homogenous, universal expression for all of India, and drew from the Mughal architectural precedents of Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri.

The search for an architectural expression of the 'Raj,' led to experiments in hybridization and culminated in the 'Indo-Saracenic.' It was considered to be "...neither Indian nor altogether European but a fascinating if somewhat eclectic mixture of the two."[37] It began with Chisholm in Madras, Charles Mant in Ajmer and Baroda and William Emerson in Allahabad. These architects freely employed regional forms and designs rather than the application of a homogenous Mughal style from Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. But this was to change, and in the early 20th century buildings were designed with architectural sources drawing from the Mughal tradition.

The term 'Indo-Saracenic' was originally adopted by James Fergusson to describe the architecture characterized by a mixture of Hindu and Islamic design elements. It is misleading, as the Islamic element in Indian architecture is not strictly Saracenic or of Arab origin. The Muslim conquerors of India were not Arabs but Afghans and Central-Asians, whose cultural heritage came from Persia and Central Asia. But, its usage in late 19th century is appropriate in associating the Islamic with Saracenic— as the architecture of the Mughals and their predecessors.

> "Europeans were not unvaryingly sympathetic to Islam. In deed, the term used in the 19th century to describe its architecture, 'Saracenic,' recalled the enduring confrontation of Islam and the West. The label 'Saracen,' first applied in antiquity to the nomadic peoples of the Syrian desert, from early medieval times onward denoted not just Arabs but all Muslims and carried with it the connotation of a fierce and bloody warrior who spread his faith by the sword and held at bay the Christian Crusaders. For Europeans, Muslims were always,

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36 William Emerson in T. Metcalf The Imperial Vision... (1989) p. 96.

37 Gavin Stamp, "British Architecture in India, 1857-1947" in Journal of the Royal Society of Arts (1981) p. 34.

> unlike Hindus, a people to be feared; and much Orientalist scholarship was directed to reducing this 'menacing Orient' to manageable proportions."[38]

He gave 'Indo-Saracenic' an unequivocal thrust and proclaimed that, nothing could be more successful than the results— the "largeness and grandeur" of Muslim architecture combined with the "Hindu delicacy of ornamentation."[39] The appeal of this architecture lay in its political symbolism as also in its aesthetic beauty. Thomas R. Metcalf, an architectural historian who has done an immense amount of primary research on colonial architecture in India, argues that there is a hesitation on part of the British historians and architects to talk of "the taste or style of the time," which he believes is because it,

> "...would reduce the opportunity to link the architecture directly to politics. No doubt a powerful builder, like Akbar, might define the 'taste' of an era, and even use architecture to undergird his claims to political legitimacy. But the British wished to see in Akbar a ruler who consciously manipulated fixed, and socially meaningful, architectural elements to achieve a set political objective. This, after all, was what the British themselves sought to accomplish in their building. Simply to participate in the ongoing development of India's historic architecture was not sufficient."[40]

He is of the view that the deliberate choice of styles for the architecture in British India was a strategy used by the British for domination. Hence, control was achieved through social practices embedded in the orientalist discourse rather than the use of force.

Metcalf's position is at one extreme of the spectrum and granting too much importance to the political aspects of architecture. I think the architects were doing their best while operating within the constraints of a political framework. This becomes apparent in the continued use of local and regional forms by Chisholm even when the governmental policy was to emulate the Mughal architecture. His attention to details, construction techniques and materials and preference for regional forms hint at an attempt to create an architecture which while representing 'British-Indian' identity, was concerned with the formal and cultural aspects of making a building.

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38 T. Metcalf The Imperial Vision... (1989) p. 36. For a detailed discussion see Edward Said, Orientalism, (New York: Penguin Books, 1978).

39 James Fergusson, History of Indian and Eastern Architecture (Delhi: Oriental Publishers Co., 1967) p. 498-9, 509, 513.

40 T. Metcalf The Imperial Vision... (1989) p. 54.

Jan Morris, an architectural historian, suggests that 'Indo-Saracenic' was deemed as an appropriate style for empire due to the political events that immediately preceded its widespread adoption. The primary cause was the revolt of 1857. Soon after that in 1858, Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, the East India Company's governor-general became the Queen's viceroy, and for the first time, a few Indians were admitted to the higher echelons of the British government in India.

> "The fact that Indians were now fellow-subjects of the Queen seemed to demand some architectural concession to the indigenous, some manner less unbending than the Classical, less utterly alien than Gothic. Without in any way conceding that Indian culture was the equal of British, or abandoning one jot of the conviction that they had been called by divine providence to the redemption of India, the British began to introduce Indian features and motifs into their imperial architecture."[41]

While the political aspects of the British policy are fairly obvious, it is important to keep in mind that such representations were the attempt of a transplanted culture to interpret another, alien culture. Underlying it is the desire of the British to establish their buildings as a continuum to the living traditions of India. In my view, 'Indo-Saracenic' style was an attempt at syncretism, where classical Hindu temple, Indo-Islamic and regional architectural elements were grafted on to structures that were basically European.

Contrary to the attitude of assimilation and adaptation of the Mughal conquerors of India, the British, in the early years, strove consciously not to be absorbed into the Indian milieu and to display superiority and dominance through their cultural heritage and historic precedent. The consolidation of the British empire was a result of the use of speedy transportation and communications network and permitted the administrative and commercial apparatus to operate with minimum of social contact and interaction. And early colonial architecture reflected a remote authority with a different cultural heritage (cf. Figs. 9 & 28).

The debate over representation or expression of power between universalists and regionalists was not restricted to India, and the French concepts of power and domination was the subject of many books and debates. The English system of colonization— that of

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41 Jan Morris, Stones of Empire: The Buildings of the Raj (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) p. 22.

'indirect rule' or using local elites and existing institutions and mechanisms of power rather than a policy of imposition of authority by military might, impressed the French leaders like, Gallieni and Lyautay. And in North Africa, the military force was replaced with social benefits and the French Protectorate style[42] of architecture in North Africa, promoted conservation and preservation of traditional cultural forms, while continuing with planned modernization.

Of note are the 1889-90, National Colonial Congress and 1900, International Congress of Colonial Sociology, held in Paris which debated the two approaches—assimilation and association. The aspect of assimilation was two fold: military prowess and European cultural predominance in language, law and architecture which had a civilizing mission in the colonies. But the proponents of association believed that a respect for and preservation of local cultures, and even promotion of an awareness of cultural differences, along with social services and infrastructure, might counter indigenous resistance more effectively than military strength. With the rejection of the 19th century policy of assimilation, came great opportunities for French urbanists and social scientists, who helped rationalize the two extremes and mitigated dramatic modernization with a policy of protecting cultural traditions. The policy of association had a strong basis in architecture and urban planning reforms and was concerned with issues of power and dominance over a subject people.

By the last quarter of the 19th century, when British attitude towards Indian architecture had altered considerably, Robert F. Chisholm, a proponent of 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture, encouraged the adoption of Indian design forms and details and was aware of the importance of the craftsman, in order that the buildings would give a general impression of 'Indianness.' Greatly encouraged by the Governor of Madras, Lord Napier, Chisholm remained open to a variety of stylistic influences. In Napier's view, Hindu architecture, with its profuse sculptural ornamentation, was inappropriate for use by the British Government for their architecture as it did not represent the collective aspirations of the common public.[43] But it is to the credit of Chisholm, that despite the view held by Napier regarding Hindu architecture, local and regional traditions remained a great source of

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42 Gwendolyn Wright, The politics of design in French Colonial Urbanism (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1991).

43 Lord Napier, "Modern Architecture..." (Aug 1870) p. 681.

inspiration. And he showed a great care, taste and control in employing Indian motifs in his design to achieve balance and unity of composition.

The architects in Bombay were busy essaying buildings in Venetian gothic style which Chisholm felt was unsuited for Indian climate, despite the underlying principles which were adaptable, because it was not possible to introduce "...the familiar forms and details."[44] But this was not the only reason, he strongly felt that once a design was complete "...we have yet to deal with the work itself and with the workmen, the men who will actually leave the impress of their hands on the material...."[45] He was the strongest advocate of employment of Indian craftsmen on his buildings.

As the head of the School of Industrial Art, Madras, established in 1855, Chisholm aimed to nullify, "...the injurious influence which the large importations of European manufactures of the worst possible designs have had on native handicrafts and also to train students for engraving and other useful occupations,..."[46] He attempted to foster and develop native arts and crafts instead of giving impetus to importation of European forms and believed that India's palace architecture contained the "germs of a very beautiful form"[47] of architecture. He was of the view that in a tropical climate, the adaptability of an imported style of architecture is not as important as its capacity to adapt to climate, to socio-cultural lifestyles of people, local materials and a capacity for "...providing surfaces and forms for elaboration which the people have been in the habit of rendering ornate."[48]

Chisholm's call for revival was not the first or the only one. Scholars and historians like James Fergusson and John Lockwood Kipling saw in the building heritage of India a tradition of living craftsmanship threatened by the spread of European styles and the work of imitative Public Works Department engineers and bureaucrats. John Lockwood Kipling was of the view that the Indian employed at the Public Works Department offices were

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44 R. F. Chisholm, "The Napier Museum, Trivandrum" Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects (1872) p. 5.

45 R. F. Chisholm in T. Metcalf The Imperial Vision... (1989) p. 62.

46 S. Muthiah, Madras Discovered... (1981) p. 70.

47 R. F. Chisholm, "The Napier .." (1872) p. 2.

48 R. F. Chisholm, "The Napier..." (1872) p. 5.

trained in British engineering colleges and did not have any knowledge or sympathy for indigenous forms.[49]

The appeal for revival, pioneered by Kipling and Fergusson, sought to return India to the golden age of classical architecture. Fergusson compared the architectural work in medieval India with the medieval cathedrals in Europe and said that,

> "The present day buildings are as important in size as our medieval cathedrals erected by master masons on precisely the same principle and in the same manner that guided our medieval masons to such glorious results."[50]

Kipling described the methods of the 'mistri' or native builder and architect and said that drawings,

> "...are seldom to scale, perspectives are unknown, and the details are not carefully made out, for, as the *mistri* superintends the work himself, he does not think it necessary to elaborate on paper parts which will be better understood when they come to be worked in situ. Yet, empirical as the practice is, it must not be supposed that things are left to chance-hap. The eye and the memory seem to have grown independent of the elaborate system of detail drawings common in Europe..."[51]

Fergusson's comparison of 'present day buildings' in India to medieval cathedrals in Europe implies a lack of dynamism in Indian architecture and calls for continuation of the medieval attitude in mid-19th century. Kipling, too, stresses the validity of classical Indian architecture and calls for a perpetuation of the medieval methods and processes in an attempt at revival. Such an attitude amongst the historians seems to have influenced the architects who indulged in the blind copying of patterns and designs of Indian motifs and designs from pattern books like Owen Jones's "Grammar of Ornament" published in 1868 and Samuel Swinton Jacob's, "Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details" published in 1890. Under the Public Works Department the status of the master-builder was degraded[52] which, besides the employment of European styles, was a cause for concern among the 'native revivalists' who advocated the use of Indian design forms.

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[49] John Lockwood Kipling, "Indian Architecture of Today" in Journal of Indian Art (1886) p. 2.

[50] James Fergusson, On the Study of Indian Architecture (1977) p. 75-6.

[51] John Lockwood Kipling, "Indian Architecture..." (1886) and T. Metcalf The Imperial Vision... (1989) p. 163-4.

[52] William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement was a serious attempt to address this issue and also influenced architects in India.

But some architects like Robert F. Chisholm seem to have been aware of the dangers of imitation and was of the view that the architect could either follow,

> "...the comparatively easy archaeological road, copying piece-meal and wholesale structures of the past, or he may endeavor to master that spirit which produces such works and select, reject and modify the forms to suit the altered conditions."[53]

Chisholm is, most probably, referring to the employment of traditional craftsmen in the construction of 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings. He was aware that the craftsmen were already trained and skilled in a particular tradition but he believed that they could be retrained to produce forms which would suit the altered conditions and needs of the British.

The above statements made by Chisholm, if taken at face value, display a concern for revival of the Indian arts and crafts, but the role of the craftsman is completely altered from the traditional one. The craftsman is no more a 'master craftsman,' i.e. involved in every aspect of design, but is merely made to 'render ornate' or decorate surfaces of buildings which were designed by English architects. He speaks of the craftsman or mason as an executor and not as a designer. The altered conditions were the mode of design wherein not only the buildings were designed by Englishmen, but the whole process of design and construction followed western methods (designer or architect as separate from the builder or master-builder). Architectural profession in India, as we know it today, is a western notion introduced by the British. In the Indian context, a cooperative group of craftsmen, who were members of a guild designed and executed the buildings on site. In the construction of 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings traditional craftsmen were employed but made to work according to methods alien to their training. They were not involved in the design process but were employed as skilled workmen to execute others' designs.

The limited involvement of the craftsman in the design of the buildings was due to reasons of practicability of construction but inherently it also gave the British an architectural element— the facade— that could be used as an effective tool to express British power and domination. After the building had been designed by Chisholm, the local craftsmen were asked to decorate the exterior surface of the building with Indian motifs— a

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53 Robert F. Chisholm, "New College for the Gaekwar of Baroda, with notes on style and domical construction in India" in Transactions of the Royal Institute of British Architects (1882-3) p. 141-6.

architectural element— the facade— that could be used as an effective tool to express British power and domination. After the building had been designed by Chisholm, the local craftsmen were asked to decorate the exterior surface of the building with Indian motifs— a dressing up of the facade to convey an impression of 'Indianness.' No drawings were made as the craftsmen were traditionally educated and well informed about executing such motifs. But the craftsmen who constructed the cast-iron, reinforced concrete or steel structures were the very same traditional craftsmen trained by the English in the new modes of construction, techniques and materials.

Chisholm's attempt at revival, superficial and spurious though it might have been, is distinct. The dichotomy in his attempt is evident: he has to design a building that is basically European, integrating Indian motifs and design forms, while involving Indian craftsmen, materials and construction techniques. In South India, the Hindu architectural forms of the temples and palaces, were more dominant than Indo-Islamic forms, which for Chisholm would have been the obvious choice for representing 'Indianness.' But for the British imperialists, who were attempting to establish themselves as legitimate successors to the Mughal empire, Indo-Islamic would be the obvious choice. Chisholm's design for the Post and Telegraph Office would have looked too Hindu and hence inappropriate for the architecture of the 'Raj.' In my view, he had attempted to, and to some extent, succeeded in creating a synthesis, a hybrid, representative of the Indianness of the region.

Chisholm's attitude to design was different from the practices of the engineer employed by the Public Works Department or to that of his successor as Chief Architect, Henry Irwin. While the Public Works Department did not employ local skilled craftsmen and techniques, forms and motifs, Chisholm and other chief architects in the various presidency towns and princely states, in the early years of the idiom, found in the classical Hindu, Indo-Islamic architecture and local, regional traditions, forms and motifs that would represent 'British-Indian' identity. The use of regional and vernacular forms were in response to the appeal of the revivalists who were concerned about the status of the traditional skilled craftsmen.

But Henry Irwin, Chief Architect of Madras 1889-1907, following the mandate of the British government employed Indo-Islamic motifs primarily from Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. The use of pink sandstone in the design of his National Art Gallery points to the fact

At the root of this dilemma was this issue was the nature of the representation of the imperial ideology. This was to be an ensuing debate between universalism and regionalism, which started in 1873, as to what was the appropriate expression or the 'style' of building for British India. The architectural and political debate of 1873 that was decisive in establishing the architectural language of British-Indian architecture in the last quarter of the 19th century, is an example of the influence of politics on architecture. But to assume that politics is the only aspect that influenced architecture is neglecting to see the importance of these artifacts as cultural products of their contexts and the importance of aspects like architectural form, construction techniques and materials that were effective in providing a sensitive solution to a regional architecture.

Thus, as a consequence of the debate of 1873, over the appropriate architectural style for India, between adopting, adapting and assimilating local styles or transplanting European forms in India with little modifications, which resulted in the 'Indo-Saracenic,' was no more than an application of a method universally followed in Europe. And this was in fact the criticism aimed at the 'Indo-Saracenic' style by historians like E. B. Havell who pointed out that it was no different from other British architecture as the British architects used the Indian tradition as another set of historical garments to add to the established repertoire of classic and gothic.[54] Undoubtedly, these styles were also political statements, and in the colonial contexts, one of control and domination and, they may also be seen as claims to superior cultural descent.[55]

'British-Indian' Identity and Regional Architecture

Central to the conception of 'Indo-Saracenic' building was a combination of 'European science' and 'native art,' of 'traditional forms' and 'modern technology,' highlighting India's past and defining its future. This meant that the British considered their status as a 'modern' nation ruling India to pull it out of its 'traditional backwardness' on the way to progress and one can detect a paradoxical desire for development and progress of the subjugated and colonized. Such an attitude in completely in conjunction with an imperialistic attitude. It has to do with the notion of identity of the British as rulers and masters of half the world. They, the modern state were entrusted with the task of leading

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[54] E. B. Havell, Indian Architecture (London: John Murray, 1913) p. 222, 230-1.

[55] G. H. R. Tillotson, "Indian Architecture and the English Vision" in Journal of the Society of South Asian Studies (#7, 1991) p. 59-74.

underdeveloped societies out of darkness and backwardness towards light and progress. The notion of identity, throughout the interaction between Europeans and cultures of the East has been based on the idea of 'us' and 'them.' But this is not only true of imperial societies, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime-Minister and the 'founder' of modern India, faced with the task of describing the determinants of a civilization, defines Indian society as the exclusion of all that is 'not Indian,' denoting the presence of an 'other.'

The British were mainly concerned with the conveyance of an impression of 'Indianness' through their buildings and hence the modifications and adaptations did not penetrate deeper than the surface. The modern buildings, constructed with modern materials like reinforced concrete and steel were dressed in a traditional garb, using traditional materials, stylistic forms and motifs, and craftsmen. The new public architecture of court houses, senate houses, post offices, museums, legislature buildings and railway stations were an expression of the liberal societies emerging from the industrial revolution in Europe. This change was not internal to the context of India, but was rather the consequence of colonial rule and applied from outside. The 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings were an assemblage of forms from various traditions, assembled together in an integrated manner during the design and construction of the buildings. This attitude is reflected by the University Senate House and Post and Telegraph Office, as both have a structural system constructed with contemporary modern materials while being dressed in a traditional garb. and the forms and stylistic motifs are eclectically borrowed from various traditions.

The pertinent issue here is not the choice and adopting of hybrid images and styles but what the British considered as being 'Indian' and what was the selection process that prompted the use of one motif or pattern over another. As with the ongoing 'Battle of Styles' between classical and gothic in Britain, the debate over the appropriate style for architecture in British India involved conceptions of British national identity. This architectural debate helped shape Britain's notion of itself and its imperialistic agenda, and was a testimony to a vision of empire.

As we have seen, 'British-Indian' identity was not perceived as a universal, standard, and was constantly in flux, with respect to the western identity. During the last quarter of the 19th century, when eclectic selection of forms and motifs from various historic periods was the mode of time in Europe and, local and regional, along with the classical Hindu

temple architectural and Indo-Islamic traditions remained a source for architectural forms, inspired many designs, and represented 'British-Indian' identity. The 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture of the last quarter of the 19th century borrowed from the regional traditions, both classical and vernacular, and was an attempt to create a regional architecture which combined the climatic devices of the vernacular tradition with the Hindu imagery of the temple tradition of the region. While responding to the demand for assimilation and adaptation, the architects were successful in assembling western precedents and traditional regional forms into a new language, as was the mode of time in Europe.

The early 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings employed regional stylistic elements borrowed from the classical and vernacular traditions, and represented 'British-Indian' identity. The conception of 'British-Indian' identity at the time was inclusive of the regional variations, which were not perceived as deterrent to the political ideology of the British 'Raj.' In the 20th century, the British, more concerned with the conveyance of a monolithic, singular and universal identity as successors to the Mughal empire, were consciously employing Indo-Islamic forms borrowed from Mughal architectural tradition of Delhi, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri, in their designs. Due to increasing insecurity on part of the British regarding their position in the largest dominion, the 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture was portrayed as the universal expression of British identity in India. The regional variations were now perceived as impeding the image of British as rulers of all of India, and the borrowing of forms was restricted to the Indo-Islamic traditions.

The selection of elements, whether manifesting the regionalist or the universalist attitude, was not the result of a critical understanding of the conventions from which it was borrowed. The style did not penetrate beyond the surface and retained a pastiche attitude towards the reinterpretation of history and the past. The form was not the result of need or function based criteria but due to its arbitrary selection process, intentionalist and, expressing the political ambitions of the British in India and their social conventions and attitude of eclecticism which was prevalent in England at the time.

Section II

Towards a Regional Expression

Search for an Indigenous Architecture

In the second half of the 20th century, Madras saw the development of an attitude which drew inspiration from the local and regional traditions, both high and low, to represent 'Tamil' identity, which was in response to the International style that was the predominant architectural idiom until the 1960s in India. International style was seen to create a universal idiom and suppress alternative and regional identities. To counter this growing universalism in architecture, the 'Tamil' architects looked towards local and regional sources, which were perceived as repositories of a regional character, to create a regional expression.

This reaction to the increasing singularity of expression and universalism led to an increased effort to look at and draw from the Indian heritage including the local and

regional traditions. This was equated with 'Tamil' identity and became the source of for many government sponsored projects, especially cultural centers, in South India. A similar effort had been made by Claude Batley, the head of the J. J. School of Art, Bombay, in the 1940s, who believed that the education of Indian craftsmen and architects, until that time, had lacked a thorough appreciation and understanding of the indigenous forms of architecture. He promoted the study, documentation and analysis of traditional forms through surveys and measured drawings.

The local and regional precedents were, once again, since the last quarter of the 19th century, seen as a source for representing identity. Only this time it expressed 'Tamil' identity as opposed to national identity in India (while 19th century 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture represented 'British-Indian' identity as opposed to western identity). Thus the same or similar forms acquired a new meaning in a different political context. And once again, the palace at Padmanabhapuram and wooden temples and mosques in the region provided a range of architectural forms which were seen to represent 'Tamil' culture and identity. Also, the concern for the deteriorated status of the traditional craftsmen, led to the setting up of schools and training centers based on traditional methods of teaching architecture and sculpture. The traditional craftsmen knowledgeable in ancient canons of architecture, were consulted and employed in the design of projects. Like the colonial buildings, which used traditional materials like brick and wood on the exterior while the structure was supported with modern materials like cast-iron, the buildings of the 20th century also used traditional materials, like wood, which enclosed a building with a steel and reinforced concrete structural system. This attitude of the architects was a direct critique of the International Style[56] and some of the architectural projects of the 1950s to early 80s, in Madras and South India in general, may be seen as efforts to define a regional architecture and a 'Dravidian' identity.

This surge of cultural nationalism was the means by which the 'Tamil' people denied alleged inferiority and asserted their modernity while retaining their cultural identity. Hence, there was neither an absolute acceptance of the universal standards of another culture, which had to be imitated and surpassed, nor were the inherited traditions, which identified them, completely rejected. A brief introduction to the issues of nation and

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56 A. G. Krishna Menon and A. M. N. Ganju, "The Problem," in Seminar (Aug 1974) p. 10-13.

nationalism, would lead to an understanding of definition and representation of 'Tamil' identity.

Nations, Nationalisms & Identity

Historically, nationalism is a modern concept and is rooted in the development of industrial capitalism in the West. It is a result of rapid growth in urban population and its far reaching penetration of isolated communities by a global economy, backed by a centralized political set-up.[57] The rise of nationalism in the 18th century may be attributed to the disintegration of religious communities and dynastic realms. This is not a simplistic evolution of one form of cultural system into another more developed form. Rather it has to be understood as a consequence of the preceding cultural systems.

The 19th century in Europe saw the development of close ties between the state and the individual, and soon resulted in secular rule and representation, which was the consequence of the struggles of the newly empowered bourgeoisie. The three stages of national movement in Europe were firstly, a cultural, folkloric phase, secondly, the coming together of a group of pioneers and militants believing in the national idea which was the beginning of political campaigning for this idea, and finally, the eventual obtaining of mass support, which nationalists claim that they represent.[58]

The concept of national identity cannot be separated from the concepts of nation and nationalism. Ernest Gellner defines nationalism as a 'theory of political legitimacy,' which believes in the congruency of the political and national units.[59] Although, most historians and theorists agree that the existence of nations is a result of nationalisms and not the other way around. Hans Kohn's basis of the subjective and objective definitions of nationalism begins with the premise of western European nations as the 'willed' nation idea[60] versus the eastern European nations as deviants based on language, blood ties and ethnic origins. E. J. Hobsbawm defines nations as territorial states at a particular stage of technological and economic development. According to Benedict Anderson, nation is an imagined

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57 E. J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalisms Since 1780: Programme, Myth and Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 42.

58 E. J. Hobsbawm, Nations and... (1990) p. 11-23.

59 E. Gellner, Nations and Nationalisms (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) p. 1.

60 E. Renan, "What is a Nation?" 1882. Translated & annotated by Martin Thom. Reprinted in Homi Bhabha, Nation and Narration (New York, 1990) p. 8-22.

political community— 'imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.'[61] It is imagined as most members of a nation will never know each other, although there is a feeling of community. It is not a result of certain social realities but is consciously invented or created.

Both Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner are of the view that a fundamental change in the perception of the social conditions is a precondition for the emergence of nationalism. While Anderson attributes this change to 'print-capitalism,' Gellner thinks that it is the 'Industrial society.'[62] Gellner too, defines nation as not the awakening of a people to self-consciousness but that "it invents nations where they do not exist."[63] However, to Gellner, unlike Anderson, this invention is a fabrication with implications of falsity rather than with aspects of creation and 'imagining.'

Said and Anderson define nation as a cultural structure or system much like the religious community or the monarchic realms. In the construction of a nation, culture grants a sense of ones own, distinct identity and history. Despite the claims of modern nations regarding their rootedness in antiquity and their being a natural human community which requires no justification other than self-assertion, they are constructed and invented.[64]

> "No matter how democratically the members of the elite are chosen (usually not very) or how deeply divided among themselves they may be (usually much more than outsiders imagine), they justify their existence and order their actions in terms of a collection of stories, ceremonies, insignia, formalities, and appurtenances that they have either inherited or, in more revolutionary situations, invented."[65]

On the verge of independence, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime-Minister and the 'founder' of modern India, faced with the task of describing the determinants of a civilization, defines Indian society as the exclusion of all that is 'not Indian,' denoting the presence of an 'other'. It has been pointed out by many that the dominant strains of an Indian identity display a pluralistic, anti-historicist, context-sensitive, androgynous view

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61 B. Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New York: Verso, 1991).

62 E. Gellner, Nations and... (1983).

63 E. Gellner, Thought and Change (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1964) p. 169.

64 E. J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Eds. The Invention... (1983).

65 C. Geertz, Local Knowledge: Further ... (1983) p. 125.

point.[66] Hence it can be argued that the Indian state, like most non-western nations, is not so much a 'natural' consequence of internal societal revolution but a cohesive body, constructed by those constrained in a spirit of unity, to resist colonial domination. The Indian state being an inherently political and geographical entity and not a cultural one, the India of 'unity in diversity' is embodied in the future than in the past— a liberating, universalizing and modernist idea.

Partha Chatterjee, a leading Indian political philosopher, is of the view that much nationalist thought in India relies on the realities of colonial power, either in totally opposing it or in affirming a patriotic consciousness. He emphasizes that in the non-western world nationalism has been transformed by the elites into a political ideology for legitimizing their power— appropriating the nation and propelling it towards universal modernization. It is primarily a cultural phenomena, often taking a political form. It was a consequence of a feeling of inferiority and disadvantage measured against the standards of progress and development set by countries like France and Britain. In other western countries, inferiority of culture and its incapacity to achieve the standards was not at all an issue of concern as the standards of progress were not considered alien to the national culture. The eastern countries, on the other hand, had had to adapt their culture to the universal standards set by the western nations. There was a sense of disadvantage and the inherited culture had to be adapted to achieve those universal standards.

> "The 'Eastern' type of nationalism, consequently, has been accompanied by an effort to 're-equip' the nation culturally, to transform it. But it could not do so simply by imitating the alien culture, for then the nation would lose its distinctive identity. The search therefore was for a regeneration of the national culture, adapted to the requirements of progress, but retaining at the same time its distinctiveness."[67]

The attempts at reshaping the urban landscape, in post-colonial Madras can be traced to the creation of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (henceforth DMK) Party founded in 1949,

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66 A. Dutta, Of context and Modernity, the Indian Framework: Incursions into the Architectural Subject/Object as Cultural Product of the Contemporary Condition (Ahmedabad: CEPT & Vastu Shilpa Foundation, 1993) p. 7-9.

67 P. Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) p. 2.

which ushered in a period of Tamil cultural nationalism.[68] The rise of the DMK party was not directly rooted in anti-colonial sentiment, but was built on a foundation of opposition to the native elite who benefited from an enhanced status under the British, in this case the Brahman[69] community. The reaction to this was a 'cultural revolt' against what was perceived as North Indian and Aryan religious, social and economic exploitation. The DMK party emphasized the Tamil cultural heritage— language, literature and architecture, in order to legitimate its power.

Origins of Tamil Cultural Nationalism

Tamil nationalism is not territorial but cultural, believing in the idea that a nation is a group of people who possess certain common cultural characteristics, and hence prioritizes the collective over the individual. Territory or land is not a necessary or sufficient condition for the formulation of a nation. Hence, cultural nationalism posits selves that are not denatured abstract individuals but include, as part of every construction of the self, a commitment to a tradition.[70] Cultural nationalism defines the nation as a group of people who possess certain cultural characteristics. In the words of Margrueite Ross Barnett, it is,

> "One of many ideologies for purposes of mass mobilization of groups that seek greater power."[71]

The equality of culturally defined nations or groups is stressed within a culturally heterogeneous territorial state. As against the notions of the territorial nationalists, concentrated group settlement on contiguous land is not a necessary or sufficient condition of nationalism. Thus a nation constitutes a group of people, with common cultural heritage, scattered within a larger territory. Cultural and territorial nationalisms are not dichotomous, i.e., traditional and modern but rather are different forms of nationalisms. The domination of the northern states over the southern states for centuries, in the political arena, was the

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68 M. Ross Barnett, The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

69 According to Hindu world view, society is divided hierarchically into four 'varnas' or classes, with the priest-teacher (Brahman) holding the highest position, next is the warrior-king (Kshatriya) who is the ruler of the lands and has secular power, in third position are the merchant-farmer (Vaishya) who has authority over trade and resources and the lowest are the laborer (Suddra) whose duty is to serve and is dominated by those above him in the caste system. And Gandhi's 'harijans' or tribals who were outside this system. This was the complex nature of the notion of division of labor in the Indian society.

70 M. Ross Barnett The Politics of... (1976).

71 M. Ross Barnett The Politics of... (1976) p. 315.

basic cause for making political identity an ideology and public policy issue in South India, by the Dravidian movement, to which the origin of Tamil cultural nationalism can be traced.

To analyze the politics, an understanding of the South Indian society is essential. According to the Vedic theory of Hindu caste system, the society is divided into four divisions or 'varnas' (color), hierarchically differentiated on the basis of occupation and ritual status: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Suddra. The Brahmins occupy the highest rung in this hierarchy and are said to have originated in the mouth of 'Purusha' (God). They are priests, mediators between God and Man and scholars who have the right to acquisition of knowledge. Kshatriyas originate from his arms and are rulers and soldiers; Vaisyas from his thighs and are merchants and landowners; Suddras from his feet and are peasants, laborers and servants. Below the Suddras and outside the 'varna' system are the outcastes or untouchables.[72] In north India, the 'varna' system is realized due to the presence of all four divisions, but in south India, there are no Kshatriyas or Vaisyas. Hence all castes are either Brahmin, Suddra or untouchable.[73]

In the early 20th century, Madras Presidency politics was dominated by the Brahmin—non-Brahmin conflict. During this period of social change the caste identity of certain non-Brahmin elites was challenged and threatened due to urbanization and modernization. The creation of a non-Brahmin identity, on the basis of a common Dravidian past, by the 'non-Brahmin movement'[74] was in opposition to increasing Brahmin hegemony.

In pre-modern times this cultural isolation of the Brahmins was not as significant and, prior to the 20th century, inter-caste relations in South India, among `jatis' or endogamous caste units in localized village or district areas, were competitive, conflictive and cooperative. Brahmins and various cultivating or land owning groups shared local control. This group of powerful land owning elite non-Brahmins, later known as 'forward non-Brahmins,' sought to remain separate and distinct from other non-Brahmins, sharing a

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72 For a detailed discussion see L. Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus: An Essay on the Caste System (1970) p. 253.

73 T. V. Subramaniam, "The Tamil Brahmins: Some Guidelines to Research on their Emergence and Eclipse" in Economic and political Weekly (#4, 1969) p. 1133-6.

74 The term is loosely applied to all the organizations and activities associated with protest against supposed Brahmin hegemony during this period.

special relationship with the Brahmins based on ritual opportunities. In the 18th and 19th century, this situation was altered due the increasing Brahmin dominance in the British administration. While the Brahmins dominated the newly created urban professions, the non-Brahmins maintained control in rural areas. Hence the dichotomization of elites into Brahmin and non-Brahmin may be attributed to urbanization and modernization policies in the British Government.

The Brahmin—non-Brahmin conflict modeled as a conflict between the 'forward' Brahmins and 'backward' non-Brahmins, masked the underlying tussle for power between a land owning non-Brahmin elite with a history of rural dominance and a nascent urban Brahmin elite that had used the opportunities presented by British rule. The formation of the 'non-Brahmin movement' made the 'non-Brahmin' a socially, culturally and politically relevant category.

Urbanization and modernization effected the position historically occupied by the non-Brahmin elites. Movement to cities challenged their caste identity and position in society. Being lumped into an undifferentiated category, namely 'Suddra,' and the transition from a secure transactional system to a system in flux, frustrated the expectations of a wealthy and educated elite group. This encouraged the notion of a superior past of the Dravidian civilization. Disjunctions between the present and an ideological construct of Dravidianness (later Tamilness) was to remain an important aspect of Dravidian movement and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam party politics during the cultural nationalist period.

The founding of the DMK political party in 1949, heralded an era of Tamil cultural nationalism, and was a turning point in the political history of Tamil Nadu, South India. Nationalist sentiments existed before 1949 but were in its nascent form and hence overshadowed by other political ideologies. The DMK used Tamil Cultural Nationalism to shape a mass mobilization movement with an agenda of social reform. Tamil nationalism is no exception and encapsulates the complexities and contradictions. In its positive and progressive form it was one of the most significant social reform movements in Indian history. But as a reactionary force it was narrow, parochial and chauvinistic. Like many other colonized peoples, the rise of DMK Party and cultural nationalism was not directly rooted in anti-colonial feelings, but was an opposition to the enhanced status of the native elites, in this case the Brahmin community, under British rule.

The Justice Party formed in 1916 was a direct precursor to the DMK party and formed the core of the non-Brahmin movement. The movement was a reaction to the increasing poverty of the lower classes and the Brahmin dominated politics of the colonial government and the nationalist movement in South India.[75] The movement took the form of a 'cultural revolt' against perceived social, religious and economic exploitation of north India.

By the 1920s, the Justice Party evolved into the Dravida Kazhagam (Dravidian Federation) and continued to emphasize the Tamil cultural heritage of the region. As a result of this policy, Tamil language and literature were popularized by the 1950s, the party looking for greater following and political representation, altered their political stance. They turned away from their anti-Brahmin strategy and focused on the elements common to Brahmins and non-Brahmins alike, in the Tamil culture. One of the first steps towards the resolution of the conflict was renaming the state in 1967, from Madras to Tamil Nadu— the land of the Tamils. The continued use of British institutional buildings and with the appropriation of the Secretariat in the Fort St. George, the seat of British power in colonial times, the state government proclaimed themselves the legitimate rulers. Although the emphasis was on Tamil language, literature, architecture and cultural traditions, the mechanisms for legislation remained the same, as those of British government in India, although divested of their old meanings but acquiring new ones. In the construction of the Tamil identity, an attempt was made to unite the Brahmins and non-Brahmins and,

> "The opposition between Brahmin and non-Brahmin was replaced by the opposition between Tamils (Dravidians) and all others."[76]

Thus, their identity was now posited as 'Dravidian' or 'Tamil', as opposed to the North Indian Aryan identity. And to represent this identity, the effort was to return to the pre-Aryan Dravidian history of the region. Elements of 'Dravidian' culture as represented through literature, poetry, sculpture and architecture became the source and a focus of study by intellectuals and practitioners. The 'Dravidian' culture was presented as superior to the Aryan one and a golden age was defined for its perpetuation.

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[75] In 1939 a conference was held to demand the creation of a 'Dravidisthan'— a separate state of the Dravidian people— to protect the rights of the Dravidians and insure non-Brahmin leadership in South Indian Politics.

[76] M. Ross Barnett The Politics of... (1976) p. 267.

To summarize, the concept of 'non-Brahmin' is intrinsically rooted in the notions of cultural unity of South India, the basis of which is a common 'Dravidian' past. The idea of 'Dravidianness' is a result of a development of a sense of 'Dravidian' cultural history as separate and distinct from that of the South Indian Brahmins. The lumping together of all non-Brahmins as 'Suddras' led to frustrated expectations of wealthy, educated non-Brahmin elites. This linked the concepts of 'Dravidianness' and 'non-Brahmin' identity into a symbolically synonymous entity. These concepts guided the politics of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam party and succeeding political parties, well into the 1960s. The politicization of caste categories, construction of a non-Brahmin communal identity and the postulation of the ancient Dravidian life as a model to be emulated were interrelated processes growing out of early 20th century social changes in south India.

An analysis of the two case examples in terms of its formal, spatial and constructional aspects would be helpful to understand the issues of nationalism and identity. To understand the importance of these artifacts as cultural products of their context, the selected cultural centers would exemplify the reasons behind the use of regional traditions and its role in the representation of identity.

The Case Studies, 1976-82

The two contemporary cultural centers attempt to project a 'Tamil' identity and employ forms and motifs drawing from pre-colonial precedents. The effort is to design buildings rooted in the context by employing forms and motifs that define a regional architecture. While the Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center draws from the high tradition of temple architecture of the region, the Kalakshetra Cultural Center is inspired by the vernacular traditions of the region. Both buildings, in the same way as the colonial buildings, use contemporary modern materials and technology for the structure of the buildings and then clothe the facade in forms and motifs borrowed from the classical Hindu temple and vernacular traditions.

In their thrust towards increasing an awareness of Dravidian culture (which was always defined as everything that Aryan culture was not), the ruling party leader and Chief Minister of the state of Tamil Nadu, Kamraj, commissioned a cultural center, Valluvar

Kottam, in 1976. It was named after the Mylapore Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar[77], who lived in Mylapore in the first century AD. Kamraj died before the building could be completed, but it was inaugurated on the occasion of the swearing-in ceremony of his successor, Karunanadhi. This complex is designed by the architect P. K. Acharya,[78] but in the best tradition of Hindu architecture, in no official pamphlet or publication is an architect mentioned or given credit for the design of the project. The project is attributed to Ganapathy Sthapati, a traditional craftsman with a knowledge of the ancient canons of sculpture and architecture.

The Kalakshetra Cultural Center, 1980-2 seeks to inspire an interest and understanding of the Dravidian culture amongst the common man, by popularizing the classical dance forms. The cultural center was inaugurated by the Vice-President of India, R. Venkatraman, to promote an awareness of the culture of the region. The building design is a cooperative effort of an architectural firm and a traditional 'sthapati' (a person well read in scriptures and traditional treatises and trained in the traditional construction techniques and design forms) who is also a trained civil engineer. The center is built by traditional craftsmen skilled in the regional vernacular traditions of wooden construction. The use of forms borrowed from the vernacular temple traditions, the designers seek to create a regional expression rooted in the context.

Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center, 1976-8

Between Nungambakkam and Kodambakkam, in the western part of Madras, is the Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center, constructed between 1976-8 and, dedicated to the memory of the Tamil sage, saint and poet Thiruvalluvar. The complex is one of the many locations that have become a pilgrimage destination (other such monuments are the 'samadhis' or resting places of the political leaders) for the devotees visiting a Hindu temple nearby. Unlike the religious temples, this center is dedicated to a pre-Aryan, Dravidian saint who composed in Tamil, the language of the people of this region. The sanskritization of the region and the increasing dominance of Brahmins, after the arrival of

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77 Thiruvalluvar lived in Mylapore (Madras) in the first century AD and composed "Thirukkural," a collection of moral philosophies on righteousness, wealth and love in 1330 stanzas.

78 Prasanna Kumar Acharya was a professor in the Sanskrit Department at the University of Allahabad in Central India. In the 1920s he translated the Manasara, a Sanskrit text, systematically dealing with all aspects of architecture: selection of site, testing of soil, planning, designing, how to fix cardinal points using a gnomon, and astronomical and astrological calculations. The books written by him include, A Dictionary of Hindu Architecture: The Manasara, The Architecture of Manasara and Indian Architecture.

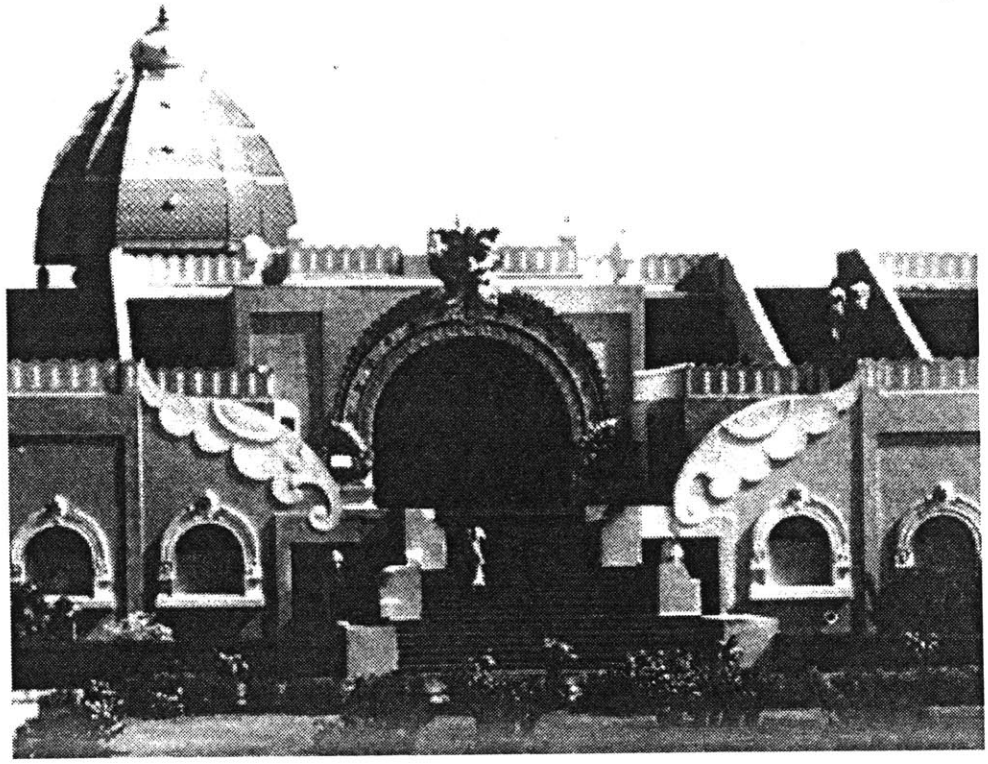

Fig. 38 Valluvar Kottam Cultural center, Madras, 1976-8 employs forms and stylistic motifs borrowed primarily from the classical Hindu temple architecture.

the Aryans in the 6th century AD, suppressed the regional 'Dravidian' cultures. Although the Hindu temples of the region incorporated regional Dravidian features, the indigenous culture was slowly dominated by the Hindu Aryan civilization.

The suppression at the hands of the Brahmin and non-Brahmin elites, who had gained immense power under the British government, instilled a need for recognition and representation and, led to an increased awareness of the local and regional cultures. The regionalist movements in South India, like many others in the subcontinent, used political representation with a social reform agenda to assure a position to 'backward classes.' In the case of Tamil cultural nationalism, the articulation of a myth of antiquity and cultural superiority , a myth of golden age,[79] i.e., the superiority of the Dravidian culture over the Hindu Aryan civilization, have sought to legitimate their power, and by creating a regional expression, attempted to define a regional identity.

The complex was completed on the occasion of the swearing in of Karunanadhi as the Chief Minister in 1976. His government had based its campaign on the idea of development and progress of the masses. The pre-condition, according to the Chief Minister of the state, for such a progress was an awareness of one's cultural heritage. This was a double-edged policy to emphasize the superiority of the 'Dravidian' culture of the South as against the Aryan culture of the North.

The complex consists of two main structures, the central auditorium that seats four thousand people and a temple chariot. On the roof of the auditorium is a terraced garden with two large pools. Reflected in the pools is the towering dome of the 101-feet tall chariot ('ratha' or 'ratham') in which is the life-sized statue of Saint Thiruvalluvar. At the entrance of the chariot is a statue of C. N. Annadurai, a former Chief Minister of the state and a DMK party member. Inside the chariot is a plaque in English, stating that the center was inaugurated by the President of India and the Governor of Tamil Nadu— linking the national and the state governments in legitimizing the project.

Its siting (Fig. 38) in a landscaped enclosure imitates the Indo-Islamic attitude of placing monuments in gardens, and was also an important feature of 'Indo-Saracenic'

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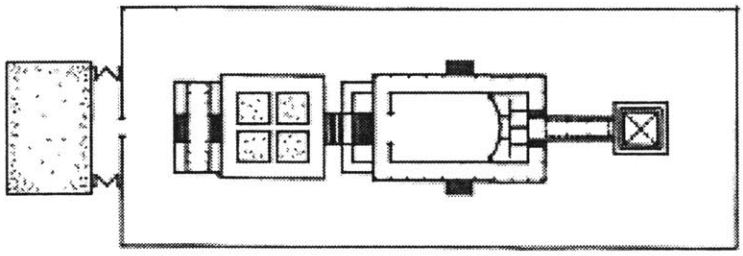
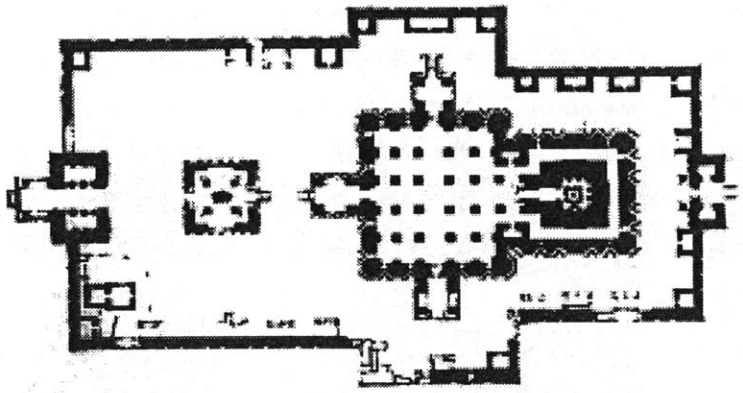
79 A. D. Smith The Ethnic Origin... (1986) p. 174-208.





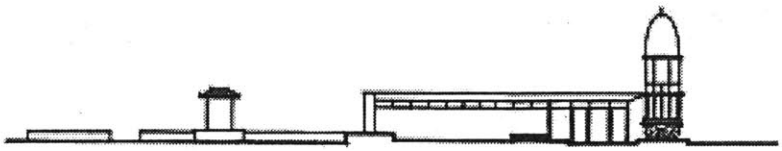


Fig. 39a Plan, Valluvar Kottam,shows the mandapam of a Hindu temple is replaced with a auditorium and the Ratha or chariot is substituted in place of the inner sanctum and topped by a Shikhara (tower).

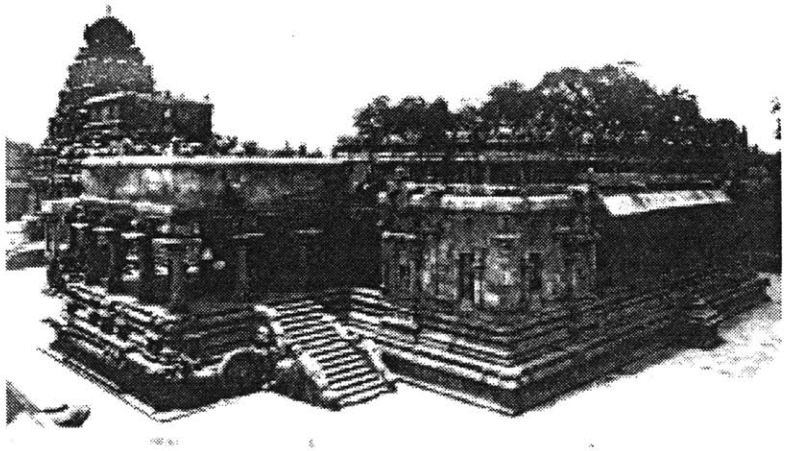


Fig. 39b Plan, Virupaksha Temple, Pattadakal, representing the sequential progression in a Hindu temple.

Fig. 40a Section, Valluvar Kottam resembles the overall spatial layout of the Hindu temple, with the chariot in place of the inner sanctum.

Fig. 40b Airavateshvara Temple, Darasuram, with the porch, colonnaded hall and tower over inner sanctum.

buildings in Madras in the last quarter of the 19th century. The main entrance to the complex is in axis with the entrance to the auditorium but, the complex is accessed by insignificant wicket gates perpendicular to it. The auditorium can also be accessed directly from the side via the colonnades around the hall. The building does not seem to have been oriented towards any particular direction following any ancient traditions but, is axially disposed towards the street and, responds to the shape of the site.

In its plan the complex (Fig. 39a) imitates the axial layout of the Hindu temples, with a 'gopuram' or an entrance gate leading via a porch to a 'mandapam' or colonnaded hall and, then to the 'garbha griha' or the inner sanctum which is topped by a 'shikhara' or tower (Fig. 39b). The entrance gateway to the complex imitates the form of a traditional entrance to vernacular temple complexes in South India. In this cultural center, in place of the inner sanctum and the tower is the 'ratha' or chariot. The 'ratha,' a mobile chariot, is an integral part of Hindu temple rituals, and during festivals, the wooden chariots are used to carry the idols of the deities along the streets surrounding the temple (cf. Fig. 13).The axial composition of the Hindu temples and its spatial relationships are destroyed by this building as the chariot is not directly accessible from the auditorium (as the inner sanctum is from the colonnaded hall of a temple). The access to the chariot, in which is a statue of Thiruvalluvar, is from the terrace, accessed by stairs at the entrance of the of the auditorium.

Unlike the local and regional temples, where the 'nritya mandapam' or dance hall is a separate structure in axis with the inner sanctum and in front of it (cf. Fig. 8), the Valluvar Kottam follows the plan layout of a Hindu temple and places the auditorium in place of the colonnaded hall in front of the inner sanctum (cf. Fig. 39a & b). In place of the dance hall is the auditorium with a stage at one end of the rectangular (almost a square) column-free hall, which has a level floor and flat reinforced concrete waffle slab ceiling. In traditional theaters or dance halls, the performance takes place at the center with the audience sitting all around. This auditorium has a stage at one end and hence does not offer the option for such a performance. There is no fixed furniture but the auditorium is equipped with the latest lighting and sound facilities.

The spatial notion of the Valluvar Kottam (Fig. 40a) is that of a Hindu temple (Fig. 40b), with an entrance gateway, a colonnaded hall and an inner sanctum in a

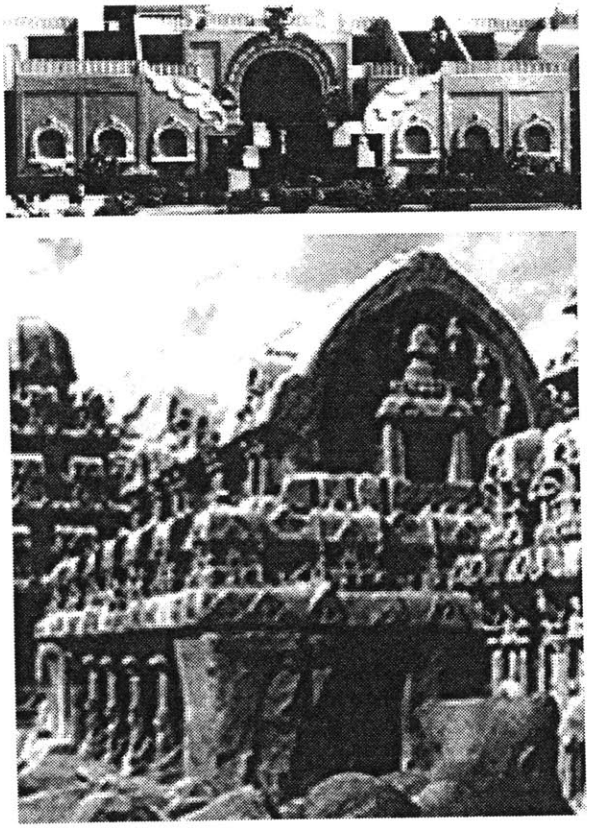


Fig. 41a Entrance facade, Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center, Madras, 1976-8, assembles the prominent features of the high tradition of the temple architecture of the region, like the chaitya arch and the carved balconies but elements are constructed in reinforced concrete and not stone.

Fig. 41b Stone chariots at Mahabalipuram showing the typical 'chaitya' arch motif, which is used for the entrance of the Valluvar Kottam, Madras.

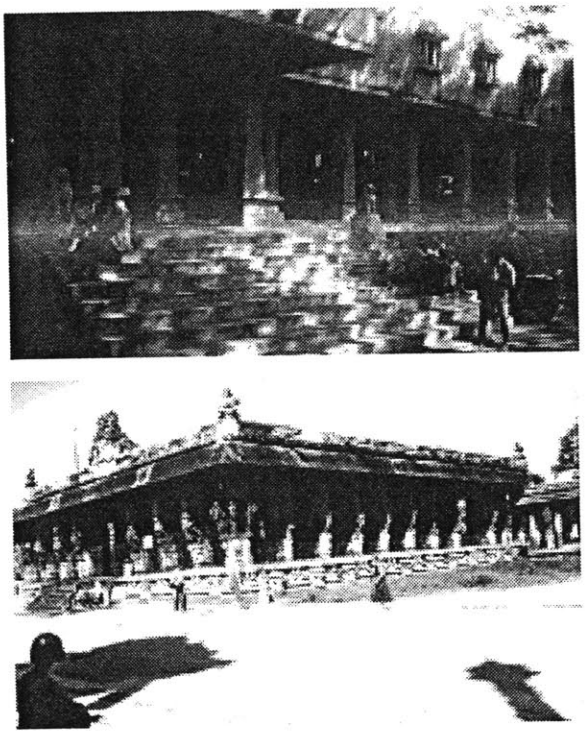


Fig. 42a The colonnade and columns, Valluvar Kottam, Madras, 1976-8, are borrowed from the Dravidian style classical temple architecture of the region, but are built in reinforced concrete with plaster of Paris decoration.

Fig. 42b Varadarajaswami Temple, Kanchipuram, with the colonnaded mandapam or hall.

symmetrical, axial layout. While the plan of the Valluvar Kottam suggests an axiality, it deviates from the traditional temple plan form. The main entrance gateway leads to a garden in front of the entrance to the auditorium. The garden in front of the building is a typical feature of Mughal architecture as exemplified by the Taj Mahal at Agra. The entrance to the auditorium, is an arched opening imitating the form of a 'chaitya' arch, atypical feature of Dravidian architecture. The colonnade around the auditorium imitates the colonnaded temple halls, but is a verandah-like corridor, mainly for circulation. It gives the impression of a verandah, profusely employed in colonial buildings. Circumambulating the auditorium, the colonnade leads to the base of the 100 feet (30 m) high chariot carved in stone. Unlike in the temples, the entrance to the inner sanctum with the statue of Thiruvalluvar, is from the terrace of the auditorium, via a flight of stairs near the entrance of the auditorium. The circumambulating verandah around the auditorium also deviates from the movement pattern in the traditional Hindu temple, wherein the entrance porch leads directly to the colonnaded hall and to the inner sanctum. Thus the focus of the axial building as suggested by its plan is spatially destroyed. The access into the chariot, the focus of the complex, from the terrace dissipates the axiality of the building and creates a rather weak spatial relationship.

The formal elements are directly copied from Hindu temple architectural precedents in the region. The main entrance gateway is similar to that of local and regional temples which are located in landscaped enclosures. The arch at the entrance (Fig. 41a) of the auditorium imitates the 'chaitya' arch, a common feature of Dravidian temple architecture (Fig. 41b & cf. Fig. 6). The hall is a column-free space with a stage at one end (rather than the inner sanctum as would be the case of temples). All the verses of Thiruvalluvar's poem are ascribed on the polished granite pillars of the gallery that surrounds the upper level of the main auditorium. The verandah-like colonnade around the hall (Fig. 42a) is a common feature of colonial bungalows and public buildings, and supports a reinforced concrete roof. But in its form it imitates the mandapam or dance hall in a classical Dravidian style Hindu temple (Fig. 42b). Structurally there is no need for the columns in the Valluvar Kottam, to have a base and capital, but the columns are modeled on the temple columns and imitate its overall form. They are constructed out of reinforced concrete and are not as finely sculpted or carved as the stone columns in traditional temples (cf. Fig. 17b). The form of the overhanging roof over the hall is directly borrowed from the classical Hindu temples of the region, but again imitates the stone form in reinforced

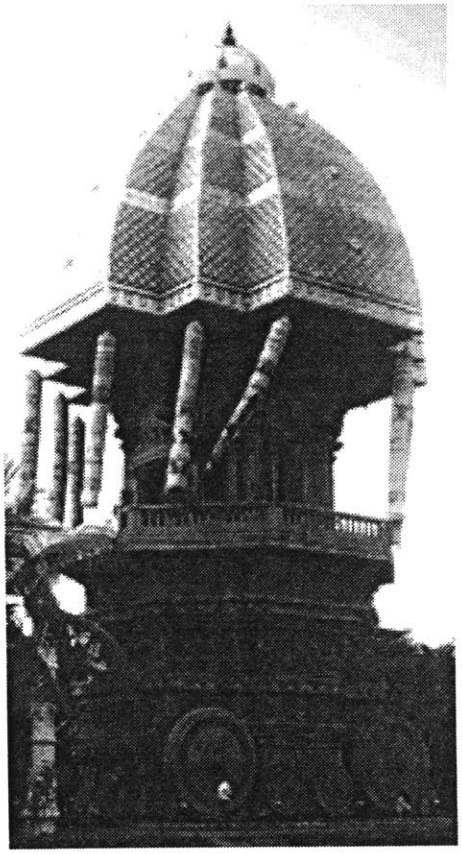


Fig. 43a The finely sculpted 'ratha' or chariot, Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center, Madras, 1976-8 is modeled on the wooden temple chariots and in it is a statue of the Tamil poet, Thiruvalluvar. It was constructed by traditional craftsmen and is topped by a 'shikhara' shell roof in concrete.

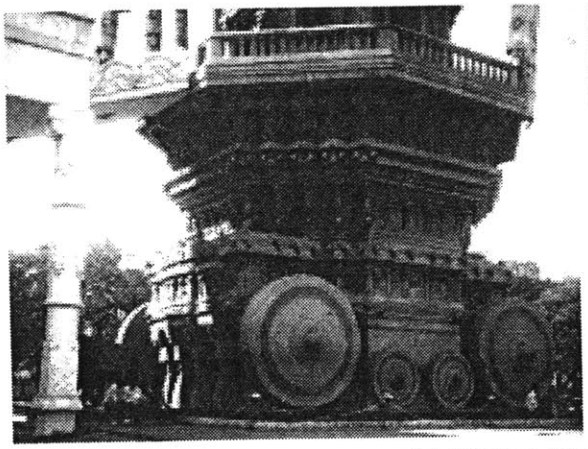
Fig. 43b Papanatha Temple, Pattadakal with the characteristic 'Dravidian' style 'shikhara' or tower over the inner sanctum.

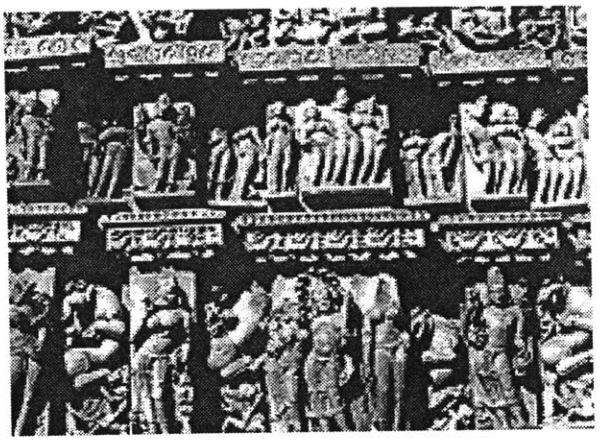
Fig. 43c The wooden 'Ratha' or chariot used for the temple festivals, with a characteristic base and roof..

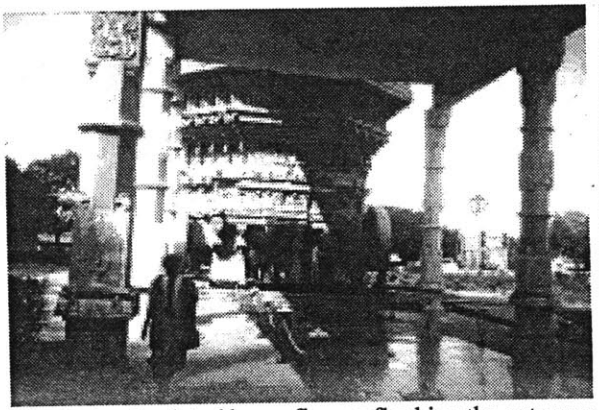
concrete. The craved balconies and the sculpted lions on the roof are typical features of the Hindu temples.

The chariot (Fig. 43a) which forms the focus of the complex is a replica of temple cars (Fig. 43b), which are a essential element of temple festivals. The temples cars are mobile and made of wood, but this car is finely sculpted in stone. This 2700-ton granite chariot, a spectacular piece of sculpture that is a replica in granite of the wooden temple chariot of Thiruvaroor (used during temple festivals to carry the image of the deity), dominates the landscape in this part of Madras. The stone chariot is topped by a 'shikhara' or tower which is a reinforced concrete shell (cf. Fig. 43a) and crudely painted to imitate the sculpted temple towers (Fig. 43c). The balustrade of the balcony around the upper level of the chariot imitate forms of the colonial public buildings and palaces. The textile banners swaying in the breeze are a decorative feature of the chariot during the temple chariot festivals. The entrance to the inner chamber, with the Buddha-like seated statue of Thiruvalluvar, is flanked by sculpted figures (Fig. 43d) which are the guardians of the entrance and are a common feature of the Hindu temples (Fig. 43e). Its form is imitated from the nearby temples at Madurai and Coimbatore. The base of the chariot is sculpted in relief (Fig. 43f) and depicts the 133 chapters of the sacred 'Kural'. The sculpted bases and panel are a common feature of classical Hindu temples (Fig. 43g). And the connecting colonnade (Fig. 43h) from the auditorium to the base of the chariot resembles those seen in Hindu temples (Fig. 43i).

The constructional aspects are in consonance with the attitude of this time, which was to promote and upgrade the status of the traditional craftsmen. While the chariot and the upper level gallery around the auditorium are sculpted and carved in stone, the auditorium and the rest of the complex is built in reinforced concrete, imitating forms and stylistic details from classical Hindu temple architecture. The employment of craftsmen from the Government College of Sculpture and Architecture, Mahabalipuram, established in 1957, is an attempt to define an alternative educational system, complimenting the modern methods of construction and techniques. By using the traditional methods, the government was sponsoring the cause of the craftsmen and by employing the traditional forms and stylistic motifs, representing 'Tamil' identity.







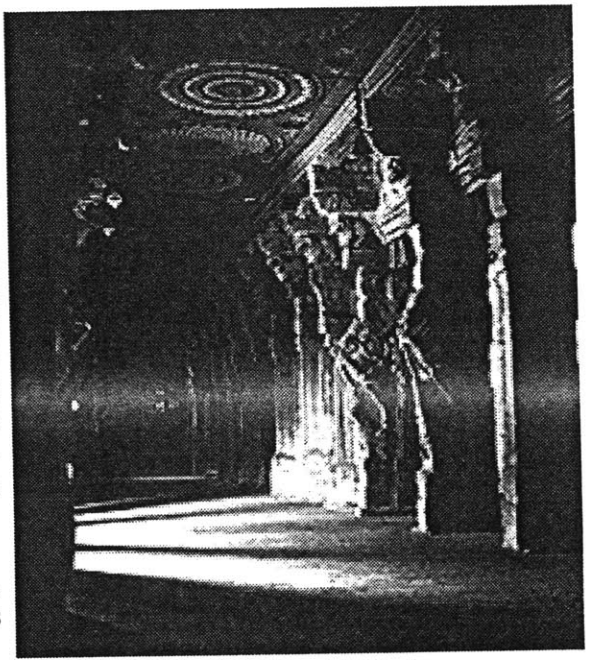


Fig. 43d Sculpted horse figures flanking the entrance to the inner chamber, in Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center, Madras, 1976-8, imitates the sculpture in Hindu temples.

Fig. 43e Varadarajaswami Temple, Kanchipuram, with the sculpted horse figures on one of the columns of the 'mandapam' or hall.

Fig. 43f The sculpted base of the chariot imitates the base of Hindu temples.

Fig. 43g Surya Temple, Konark with characteristic sculpted base depicted an event or narrating a legend.

Fig. 43h Colonnade connecting to base of 'Ratha' resembles corridors around temples with decorated roofs.

Fig. 43i Minakshi Temple, Madurai showing the decorated roof of the corridor.

The Cultural Center was built by more than 500 craftsmen and students from the Sculpture Training Center in Mahabalipuram, near Madras, established in 1952 which grew into the Government College of Sculpture and Architecture, and offered a professional degree in architecture to the traditionally trained craftsmen. Much like the Schools of Art established by the British to counter the effects of deterioration of traditional arts and crafts, the training center patronized classical Hindu architecture and sculpture which were deteriorating at the time the country emerged independent. This may be seen as an effort to legitimize the state government by assuming the role of the patron of arts— a role played by the Hindu kings in pre-British south India and upto the 17th century. Under the British, rich Hindu merchants built temples, as a way of raising their status in the urban environment and legitimizing their authority, exerting control over societal values and institutions. Aesthetically this building cannot compare with the temples constructed during the medieval period. Those who designed and assembled the building have neither the technical skill nor the artistic expertise of their earlier counterparts, yet the building reaches back to the ancient, pre-colonial period for its architectural theme.

The college is headed by a 'sthapati'— a traditional master-craftsman— Ganapathy Sthapati, and aims to revitalize and revive traditional Indian forms in art and architecture. In the words of Ganapathy Sthapati, it is a search for the roots that were responsible for our traditional buildings. Their aim is to popularize traditional methods, "...so that they can reach other practitioners of architecture who may be able to incorporate the 'shastras' (codified texts on the arts of building, construction, sculpture and painting) in their building."[80]

Like the British proponents of revival and the Jaipur School of Art, the emphasis is on the employment opportunities of the craftsmen rather than their re-training. It was firmly felt that skilled craftsmen are abundant as were their arts and crafts, but the lack of employment would force them to abandon their profession and seek other opportunities. By its very structure, the school implied a re-engineering of the architectural profession based on active involvement of the skilled craftsmen in the process of design. This is an attempt to establish the craftsmen as professionals who could enrich the design process.

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80 S. Shankar, "Trustees of a Tradition" Architecture + Design (Jan-Feb 1990) p. 103.

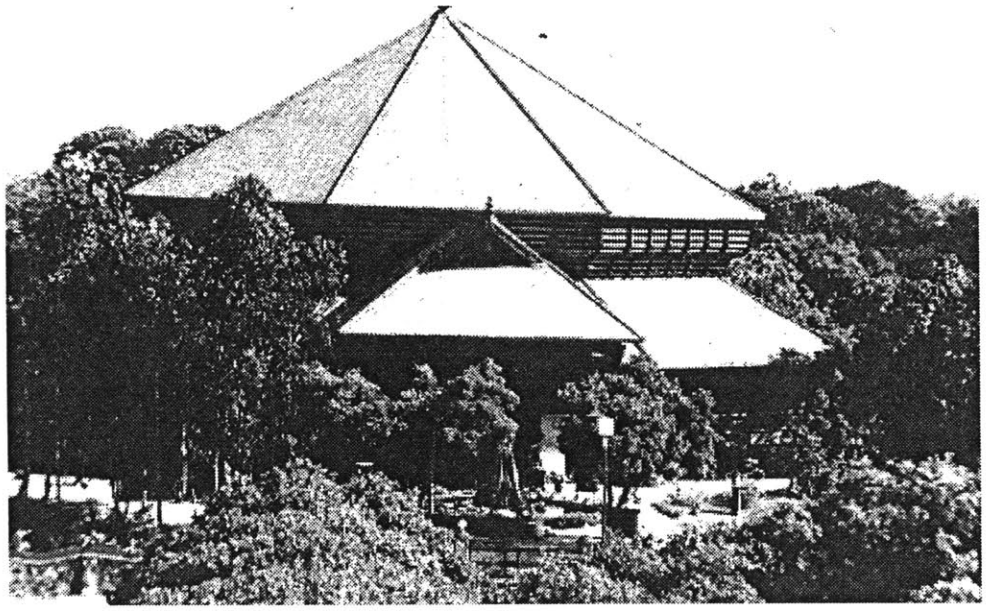


Fig. 44 The Kalakshetra Cultural Center, Madras, 1980-2, sits in a landscaped garden, like the temples of the region and has a steel and concrete structure which is clothed in wood on the exterior. The wooden architecture of the palaces, and other secular and religious architecture of the region were its main precedents.

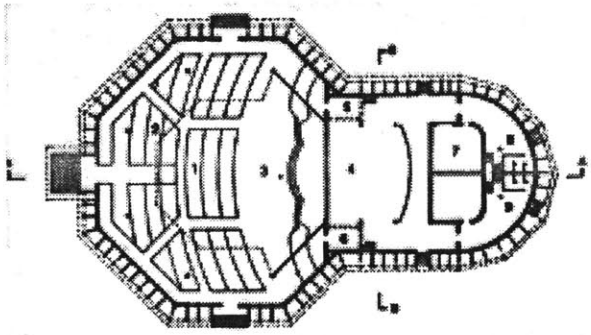


Fig. 45 Plan, Kalakshetra Cultural Center, Madras, 1980-2, is an octagon with a stage at its head and an entrance porch on the same axis. The octagonal shape resembles the circular form of the temples of the region.

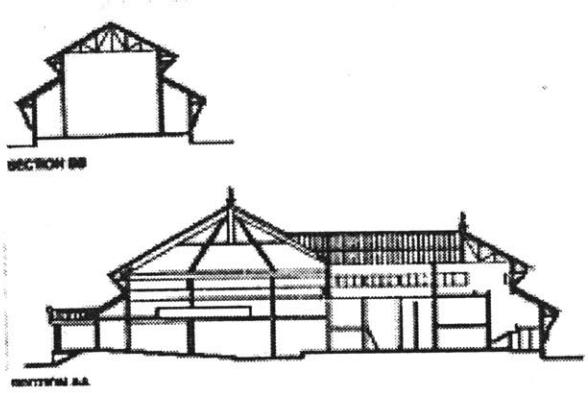
Some such effort seems to have been made in the design of the Kalakshetra Cultural Center, which employs the expertise of the traditional master-craftsmen with a professional degree in civil engineering, in their new role as consultants to architects. Their involvement in the design process, from an early stage reflects in the development of the project, which is successful in exemplifying an alternative design process, rooted in the traditional crafts and complimenting the modern system.

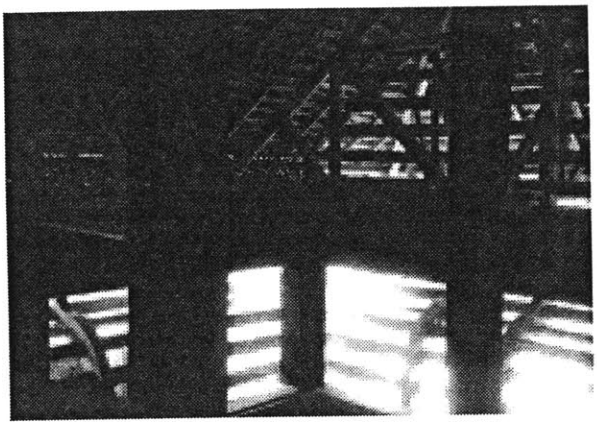
Kalakshetra Cultural Center, 1980-2

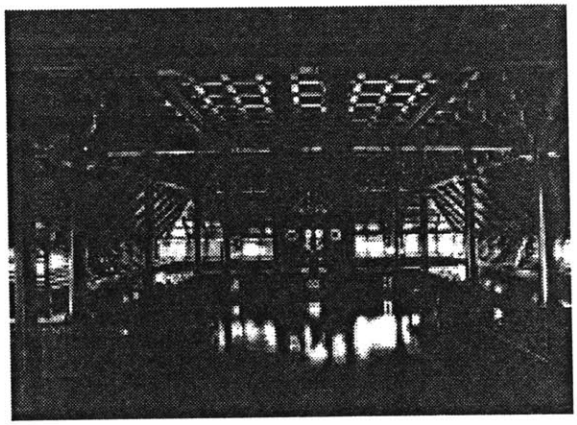
This is a cultural center for the performing arts, and its form is based on the concept of traditional principles of the 'Natya shastra'— an ancient treatise on the performing arts. It was conceived by Rukmini Devi Arundale, a leading classical dancer, who sought to popularize the traditional dance forms, to give impetus to the understanding of the regional culture. It is an auditorium to seat about four hundred and fifty people. It was inaugurated in 1982 by the then Vice-President of India, R. Venkatraman, and links the state and national governments in legitimizing the project. Its form and style makes a direct reference to the regional vernacular architecture— sacred and secular. But the building, while imitating the forms of vernacular traditions, is built in new and modern materials. The clothing of modern buildings in a traditional garb was also the attitude of the British architects from the last quarter of the 19th century and which lasted well into the 1930s.

The siting of the building within a garden (Fig. 44 & cf. Fig. 5) follows the tradition of temples of the region. The colonial garden houses and many public buildings (like the Theosophical society) in Madras were also located within landscaped enclosures. Unlike the Indo-Islamic buildings which were positioned at the center of or at the end of an axis within a garden, the Kalakshetra sits in an informally landscaped site. The 'natural' wooded landscape is seen as a conducive environment for teaching traditional dance forms. The traditional Hindu system of education is based on a symbiotic relationship between the teacher and the student with a proximity to natural environments. The students are taught by their teachers in the open landscaped areas around the theater.

The centered plan (Fig. 45) of the theater breaks away from conventional western theater forms. The octagonal plan allows for total participation and interaction between the audience and performing artists. The provision of a stage, equipped with all modern sound and light facilities, at the head of the octagon, and the flexible seating in the octagon, brings







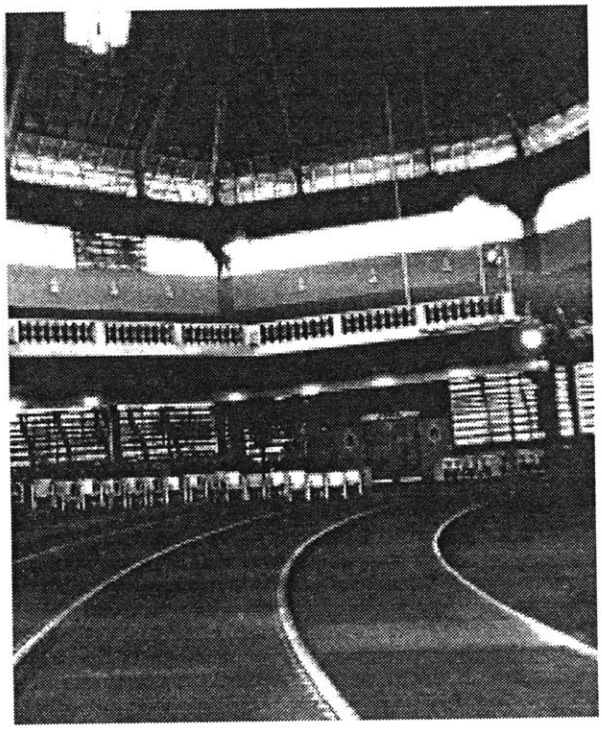


Fig. 46 Section, Kalakshetra Cultural Center, 1980-2, shows the seating area of the auditorium topped by a pyramidical roof with steel trusses and concrete columns. The slatted windows are a feature borrowed from the wooden palace architecture of the region.

Fig. 47a The wooden construction in the Kalakshetra, resembles the 18th century palace in Padmanabhapuram (Kerala).

Fig. 47b The 18th century palace, Padmanabhapuram (Kerala) is characterized by delicate carving and is a combination of slatted wooden screens, wooden columns, ribbed rafters and sloping roofs as seen in the Audience Hall.

Fig. 47c The interior, Kalakshetra Cultural Center, 1980-2, shows the gallery with the slatted wooden windows and the steel trusses of the pyramidical roof.

together the western and eastern traditions of theater. The spacious gallery around the tiered seating area allows for ease of movement and also provides display space. The Kalakshetra has definite precedent in the temples of the region, especially some in the neighboring state of Kerala (This is the region whose architecture influenced Chisholm's designs). The octagonal shape imitates the circular or even elliptical plans of the dance halls in front of the local and regional Hindu temples (cf. Fig. 8). The axial relationship between the regional temples and the dance halls in front of them is not carried through in the Kalakshetra, which can be accessed from all directions but has a main entrance to the North-east.

The spatial concept of the theater, with a high pyramidical roof (Fig. 46), is similar to dance halls in front of the local and regional Hindu temples (cf. Fig. 8). The porch leads via a flight of steps to the octagonal seating area, which has a slightly stepped floor. At the head is a stage, which is raised from the ground by about two feet. The exterior surface of the octagonal seating area, consists of slatted wooden screen windows (Fig. 47a) which are a common climatic device in the buildings at the Padmanabhapuram palace (Fig. 47b & cf. Fig. 8) and mosques and temples in the region. It provides a muted quality of light, excellent ventilation and acoustics. The gallery around the seating area, at the upper level, spatially resembles the regional palaces, mosques and temples (Fig. 47c). The form of the cultural center draws inspiration from the regional temple traditions, but uses modern technology (castellated steel beams and trusses) to span the large octagonal space. The axial position of the seating area and the stage is unlike that seen in the dance halls of the vernacular temple complexes in the region. Thus a combination of traditional regional and contemporary trends of spatial relationships, together with climatic and acoustic concerns makes this theater a popular center for performances and cultural events.

The formal elements are directly inspired by the regional vernacular traditions of wooden architecture. The octagonal plan form topped by a pyramidical roof has precedents in the dance halls in front of the vernacular temples of the region. The porch, columns, slatted windows and screened exterior surface and the pyramidical roof are integral features of the traditions of the region.

The entrance porch is supported on reinforced concrete columns and is flanked by wooden figures or entrance guardians (Fig. 48) which imitates the sculptural forms of figures on the columns of Dravidian style classical Hindu temples (cf. Fig. 43e) in

Fig. 48 The entrance porch, Kalakshetra Cultural Center, Madras, 1980-2, shows the structural concrete column and the wooden exterior, with two figures flanking the entry.

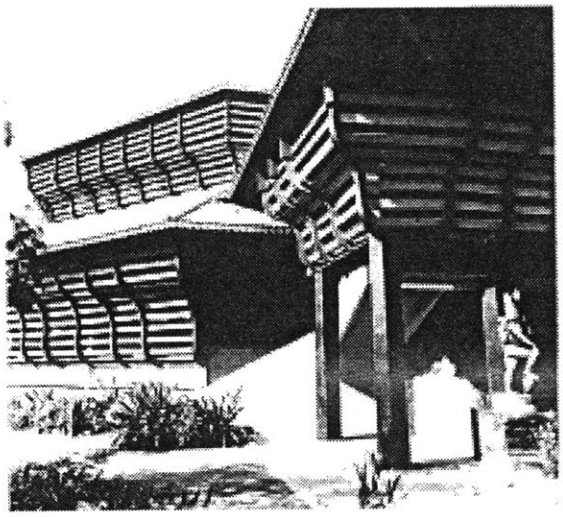


Fig. 49a The exterior surface of the Kalakshetra Cultural Center, Madras, 1980-2, with the slatted skin wooden construction resembles the palace, and other secular and religious architecture of the region. It is an effective climatic device.

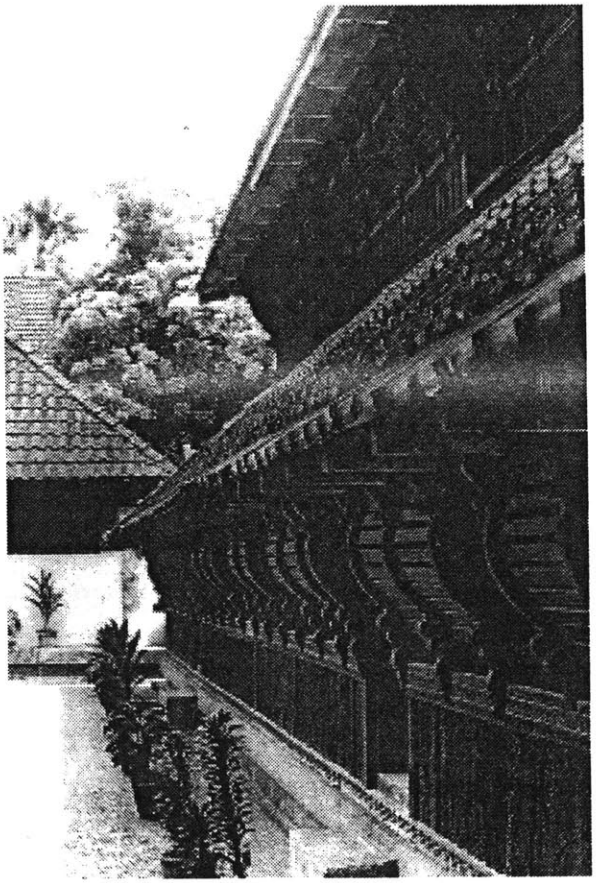


Fig. 49b Padmanabhapuram Palace, Trivandrum, 15-18th C with the characteristic wooden slatted screen windows.

reinforced concrete and not in stone. The porch is covered by the overhanging gallery at the upper level and leads into the seating area via a flight of stairs.

The slatted skin of the building (Fig. 49a) is a common climatic device used in this region for houses, palaces and public buildings alike. The wooden screens were a prominent feature of the regional palace at Padmanabhapuram (Fig. 49b). Although the brackets of the Kalakshetra are not as intricately carved as those of the wooden structures, its overall form is reminiscent of it.

The pyramidical roof of the Kalakshetra (Fig. 50a) is a imitative of the roofs of dance halls in front of the local and regional temples (Fig. 50b), constructed primarily out of wood. The wide span of the hall is covered by steel trusses supported on reinforced concrete columns, but covered with traditional timber rafters and clay tiles.

On its exterior the building form is very traditional but modern technology and materials are used for its structure. This clothing of a modern buildings, constructed in steel and reinforced concrete, in a traditional garb, reflects the attitude of the colonial architects. The employment of D. Appukuttan Nair, a 'sthapati' (a person well read in the Hindu scriptures and building codes), and a trained civil engineer in the design of the project is a step towards the revival of traditional crafts and skills along with the study of ancient texts and scriptures. The revival is not just stylistic but attempts to understand the logic and rationale underlying the traditional methods of design and construction.

It is again through the constructional aspects that we get a clear picture of the precedents and sources for the design of the building. The exterior of the building is of wood while the structure is made of reinforced concrete columns supporting steel girders of the roof, covered with timber rafters and clay tiles on the exterior. The use of wood, a material traditionally used extensively in the region for houses, temples, mosques and churches, attempts to link the theater directly to the vernacular traditions.

The employment of a 'sthapati' in the design and traditional craftsmen in the construction of the project is a positive step towards giving impetus to the use of traditional techniques and skills and, the employment of traditionally trained craftsmen in the design of projects. While traditionally trained craftsmen built this building, the quality of their skill is

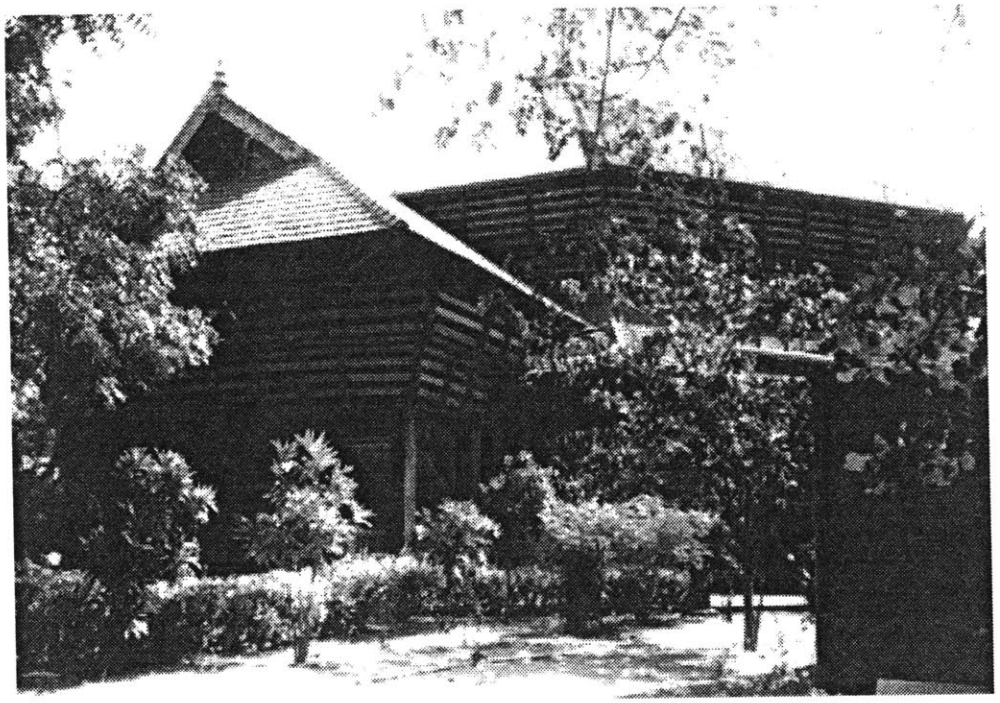


Fig. 50a The pyramidical roof of the Kalakshetra Cultural Center, Madras, 1980-2 resembles the roofs of the temples in the region.

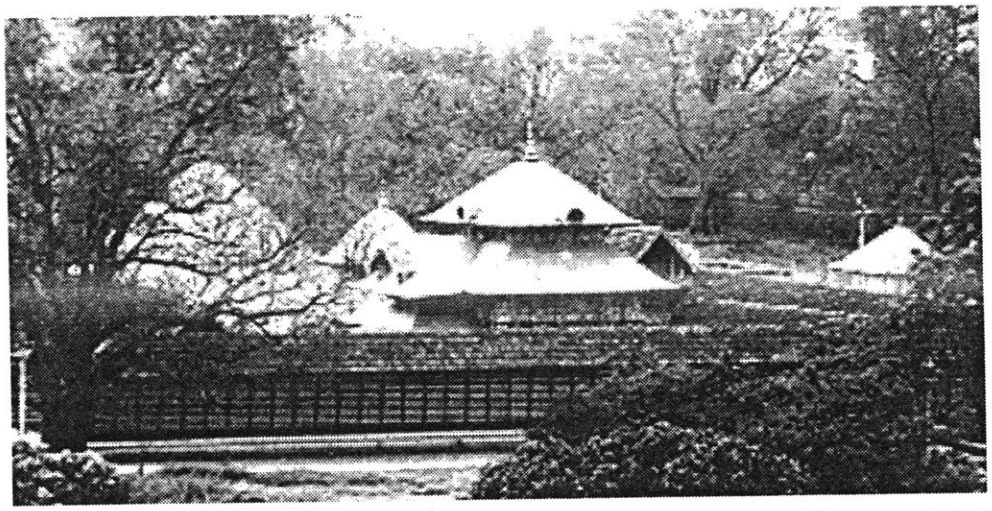


Fig. 50b Vadakunnatha Temple, Trichur with its characteristic inner sanctum topped by a pyramidical wooden roof.

not comparable to that of the builders of the Padmanabhapuram palace. But the employment of traditional craftsmen trained at the Government College of Sculpture and Architecture, Mahabalipuram (near Madras), established in 1957, encourages the traditional crafts and skills, and calls for a betterment of the status of the traditional craftsmen. It also emphasizes the validity of alternate methods of construction and design and, how a design could be enriched by the process. It very clearly is also representative of the effort to express the 'Tamil' identity and Dravidian culture through the use of regional vernacular architecture.

The project was designed with the help of D. Appukuttan Nair, a 'sthapati,' a person well read in scriptures and traditional treatises and trained in the traditional construction techniques and design forms. Its sources of imagery are the wooden, vernacular temple and palace architecture of Kerala. In the words of C. N. Raghavendran, the principal designer, "...[Kalakshetra is] definitely influenced by vernacular design. There is a lot of merit in the vernacular approach which should be reflected in the buildings of the future."[81] In the design of Kalakshetra, the 'mistri' or the master-builder is the designer, and the design decisions were based on his knowledge of the ancient treatises and construction techniques. Nevertheless the process of design is one of concretizing through drawings and not on site decisions, unlike the attitude of the architects of the 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings, who completely designed the buildings after which the traditional craftsmen were called in to decorate the surfaces.

Thus, the rationale behind the selection of forms and stylistic motifs from both the high tradition of classical Hindu temple architecture and regional vernacular traditions, while supporting an explicit political agenda, was also a response to the deteriorated status of the traditional craftsmen and their skills and emphasized the validity of regional expressions as an alternative to the increasing universalism of International style. The traditional forms were perceived as repositories of regional culture and identity. The traditional conventions of design and construction provided a critically selected context to interpret the cultural artifact and was not arbitrary or purposeful. The designs while carrying an explicit political message, broke down at instances to generate a regional expression that despite its ambiguity of articulation and representation, was an effort to create an architecture between culture and form.

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81 C. N. Raghavendran in an interview with S. Shankar, "The Old Guard" Architecture + Design (Jul-Aug 1988) p. 43.

Fig. 51 The Secretariat Building, Chandigarh, by Le Corbusier, represented the new directions for a newly independent India, free from the shackles of the past and surging ahead towards modernization and progress.

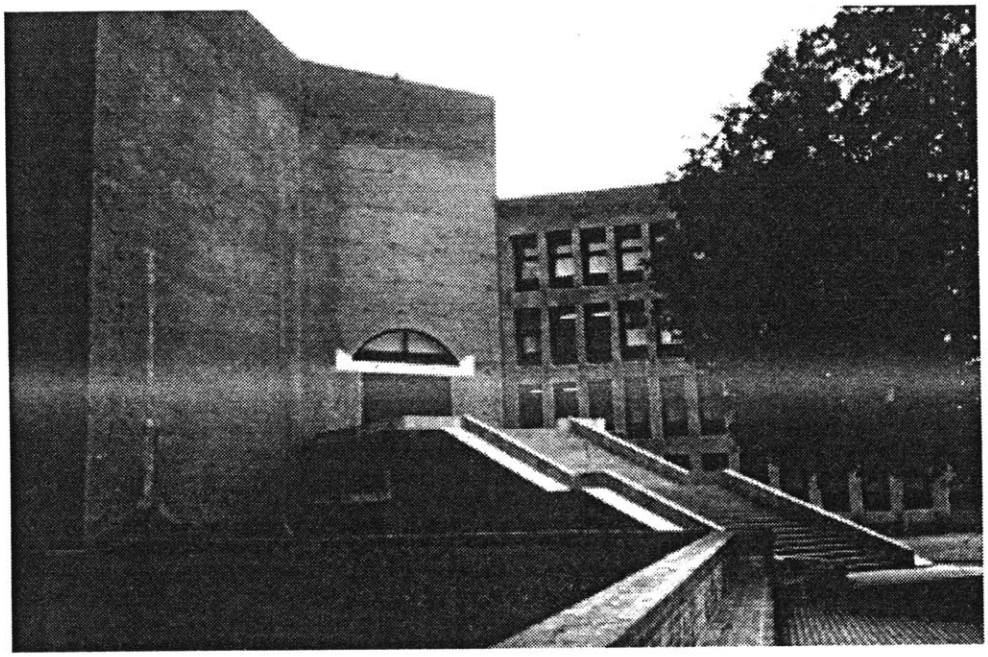

Fig. 52 The Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, 1960s, designed by Louis Kahn was an exploration of an universal vein of contemporary architecture that could also lay claim to region and tradition.

Regional Architecture as a Critique of International Style

In the west, the post WW1 years saw the emergence of the Modern movement and past styles came to be admired but were definitely not to be copied. Hence to the modernists the debate over style (such as the one over the making of New Delhi) was old fashioned and obsolete. It was firmly felt that past styles could not express the needs and spirit of a transforming world. India's link to the west was primarily through Britain, and initially the Modern movement had little impact, as Britain remained relatively conservative. Hence it is not surprising that well into the 1930s, issues of style and revivalism remained predominant in India and 'Indo-Saracenic' persisted in Madras and most colonial cities. But soon the hybrid expression was rejected by the newly independent nation and the building mandate of the late 1940s and 50s promoted a widespread acceptance of International style. But architects like Claude Batley, saw merits in the hybrid and sought the creation of an architecture inspired by the indigenous traditions. Thus both trends, one of an universal expression and the other inspired by the local and regional traditions remained popular until the 1950s, when the arrival of Le Corbusier in India, set modern architecture in the forefront.

Nehru's call for modernization was answered by 'modern' architecture, 'a style without a past in India' and hence immensely suited to the needs of a secular, democratic and newly independent nation. Modern movement provided a new insight into the possibilities of new technology and building types. The aesthetics of structural systems and the undecorated monumentality of the industrial buildings offered a new aesthetic dimension. The development policy of newly independent India, under the leadership of Nehru, was modeled on the science and industry of the West. Gandhi's resistance to modern technology, to evolve an expression rooted in the indigenous traditions were put aside as the nation marched towards progress. Le Corbusier and Chandigarh (Fig. 51) were the model and symbol of these optimistic times. Le Corbusier came to India in 1951 to design the new city of Chandigarh and was faced with the issues of cultural, political and aesthetic interpretation for a newly independent nation. Chandigarh was to be the celebration of India's status as a liberated, democratic and progressive nation and in Prime Minister Nehru's view, it was "...the temple of new India...unfettered by the traditions of the past."[82] But Chandigarh also reflected the aspirations of a somewhat westernized elite

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82 S. K. Gupta, "Chandigarh After 20 Years" in Proceedings of EDRA III (1972).

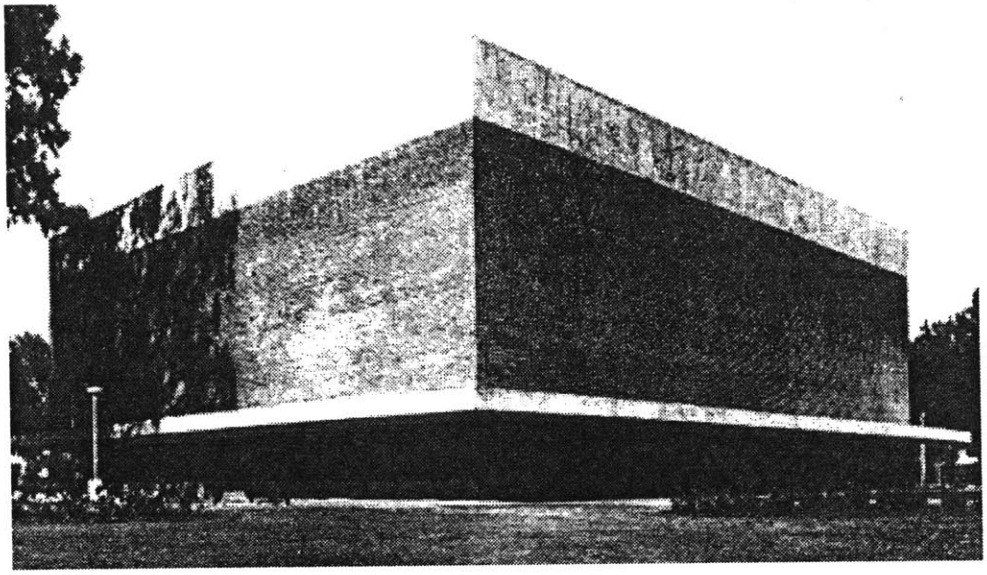

Fig. 53 The Tagore Theater, Chandigarh, 1959-61, epitomized the brick and reinforced concrete aesthetic of its time. The roof consisted of steel framed trusses and the exterior is windowless facade.

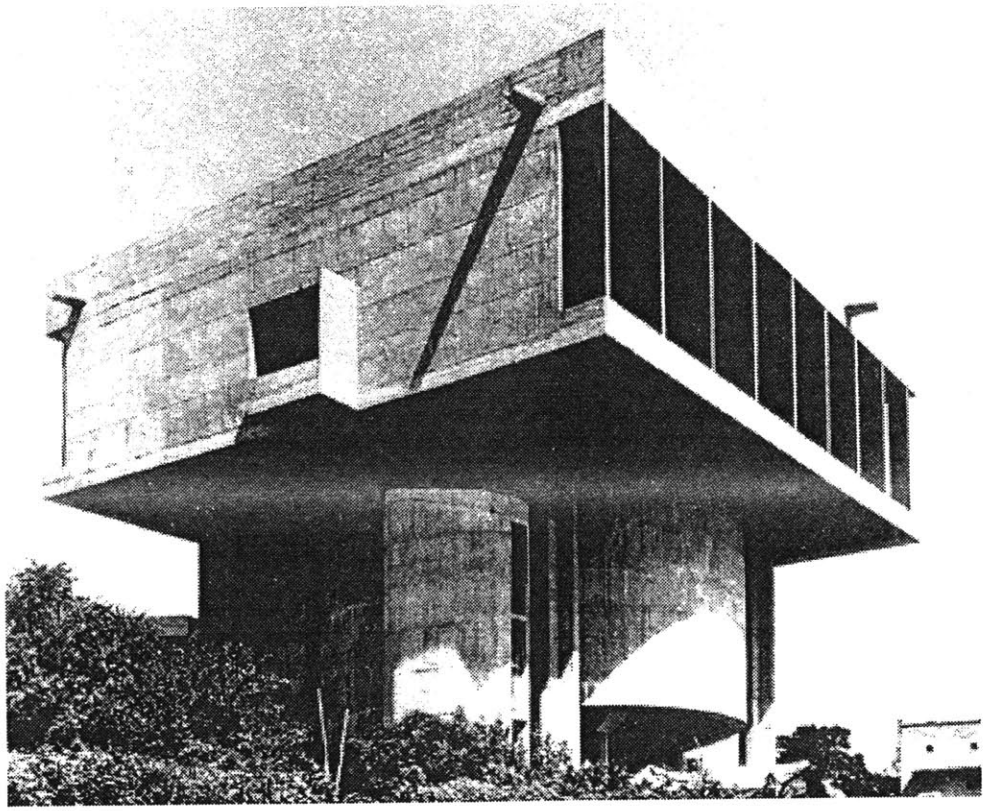

Fig. 54 The Sri Ram Center, New Delhi, expressed the modernist ideal through cubist forms and reinforced concrete.

who wanted a symbol of the new order. This was a time of foreign masters and foreign trained Indian architects, who were exposed to the progressive imagery and techniques of the International style. The young architects freshly returned from the United States, United Kingdom and other western countries, introduced this functional aesthetic through the ambitious building programs of the young Indian government.

In the early 50s Joseph Stein's India International Center sought a sensitive approach to harmonizing with the local micro-environment, Louis Kahn's Indian Institute of Management (Fig. 52) explored the new language of exposed brick and concrete, Shiv Nath Prasad's Sri Ram Center (cf. Fig. 54) emulated the plastic forms of Chandigarh, and Raj Rewal's Permanent Exhibition Complex was influenced by the foreign masters. In comparison to the buildings in Madras, other cities, especially in North India, were greatly influenced by the western masters like Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn.

The cultural centers of this time reflected the modernist ideal and using reinforced concrete, brick and other materials constructed plastic and monumental forms. Between 1959-61 the Tagore Theater (Fig. 53), Chandigarh, (Architect: Aditya Prakash & Structural Consultant: Office of the Chief Engineer, Capital Project, Chandigarh) was built to commemorate the birth centenary of the Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, a poet, novelist, artist, playwright and composer. The structure is of load-bearing brick walls supporting reinforced concrete roof on steel framed trusses. Rabindra Bhawan, Delhi, 1959-61 (Engineers: Central Public Works Department, Government of India), built for the same occasion is the home for three national academies— Plastic Arts, Performing Arts, and Literature. The international style building consists of an administrative, exhibition and theater block. The use of 'chajjas' (overhangs) and 'jalis' (screens) as climatic devices also help to locate the building in its context. According to the architect, Habib Rahman, this building reflected the philosophy of Tagore— modern creative work which neither copied India's past heritage, nor did it blindly imitate the West.

While the above two buildings were sponsored by the government, the Sri Ram Center (Fig. 54), Delhi, 1966-72, was sponsored by a private trust for promoting the performing arts. The form of the building reflects the function and in the modernist spirit is completely constructed in reinforced concrete, following the tradition of Chandigarh and Le Corbusier. This trend was to continue well into the 1970s, as is seen in the Vikram

Sarabhai Hall, designed by S. D. Sharma, Ahmedabad, 1976-8, (built in the same years as the Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center, Madras; cf. Fig. 4), which is a part of the Space Application Center. The use of exposed brick, reinforced concrete, steel and glass strive to create a modern idiom in the spirit of Louis Kahn at Indian Institute of Management (cf. Fig. 52), Ahmedabad.

Thus the buildings in the newly independent nation, especially until the end of the 1960s, including the cultural centers, were inspired by the foreign masters and were built in the Modern or International style. The attitude of Lutyens in the design of New Delhi, involving the local and traditional craftsmen in the process of construction was abandoned as India surged ahead towards modernization. Western Science and technology were seen as the way to progress and modernization and, hence excluded indigenous technology, forms and motifs from their repertoire.

But, by the mid 1970s, even in northern Indian cities, the enthusiasm for the International style was diminishing, as was the faith in a global community united in progress. Nehru's death in 1964 and conflicts with neighboring countries provoked an introspective search and, Gandhi's ideals of indigenous ingenuity and tradition presented a unifying theme. Once again, in an attempt to define micro-regional identities and, after the last quarter of the 19th century and the construction of 'Indo-Saracenic' buildings, the sources of imagery were the regional styles.

After the western masters departed, the Indian architects were on their own, free to choose their directions, interpret social needs of the people and shape the built environment. This freedom brought with it an awareness of the social relevance of architecture and, the development of social activism and alternate ideologies amongst architects and planners. The introspective search for a greater self-sufficiency, environmental harmony and social cooperation, and a delusion with the idea of progress promoted the concept of an appropriate technology[83] as the answer to India's development needs. In architecture, a conservation consciousness promoted experiments with alternative building materials, structures, and passive systems of climatic control. To reduce

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[83]The movement for an appropriate technology gathered impetus in the rich industrialized nations of the west, in 1973 when the so-called 'energy crisis,' brought into focus the plight of the underdeveloped or developing nations.

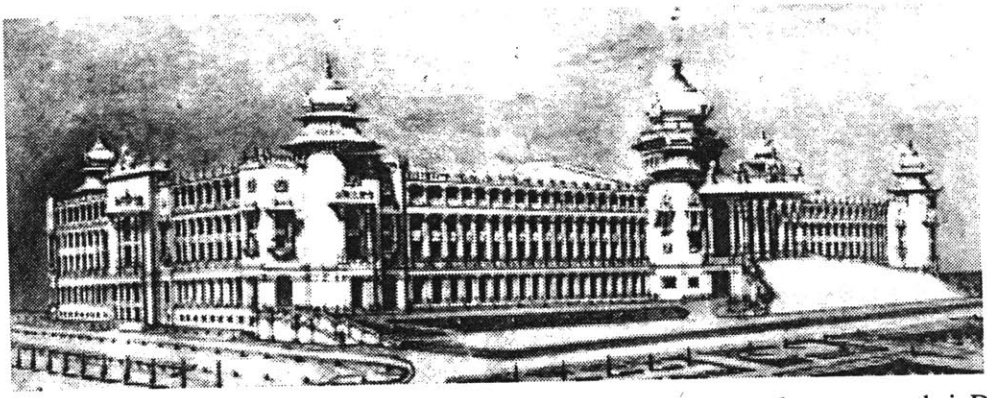

Fig. 55 The Vidhana Soudha, Bangalore, 1951-6 represented the will of the people to express their Dravidian culture.

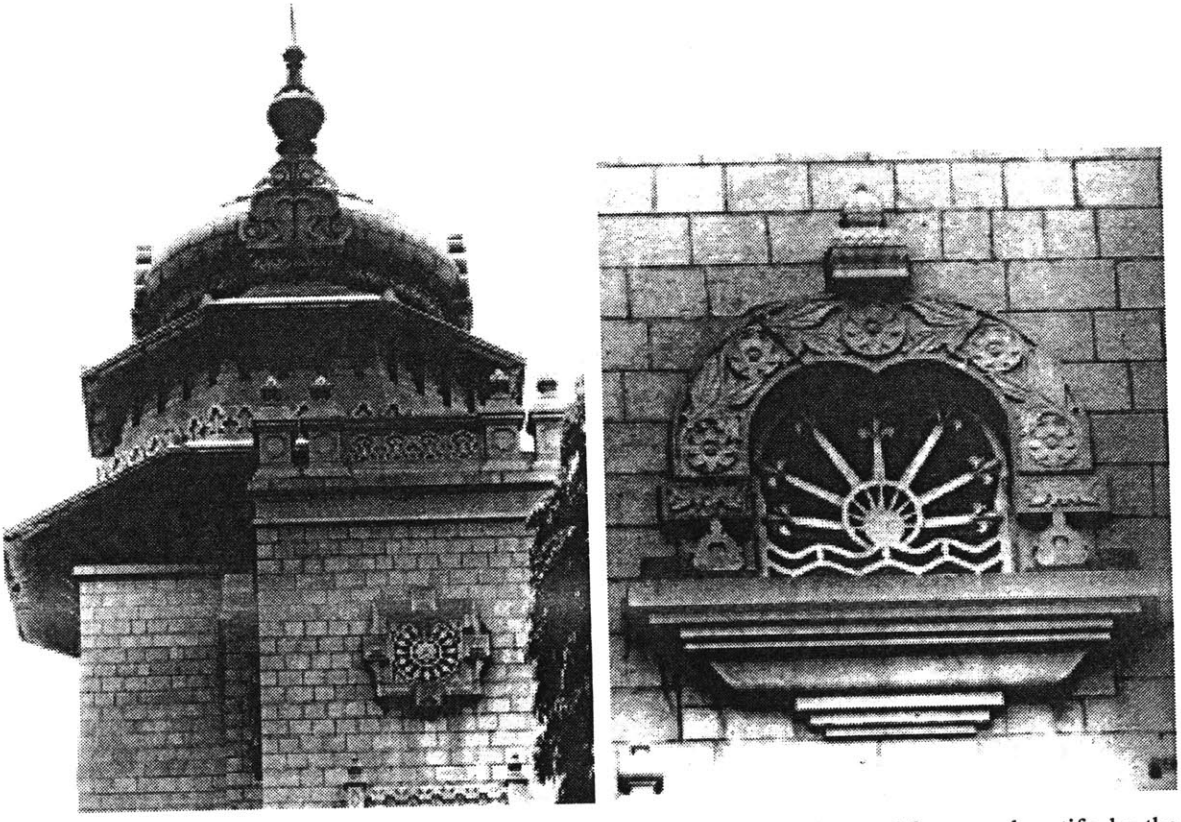

Fig. 56a & b The Vidhana Soudha, Bangalore, has finely sculpted and carved forms and motifs, by the traditional craftsmen employed in the construction of the building.

dependence on industrialized production, an investigation of organic materials and manual methods of construction were given impetus. And naturally, a renewed interest in vernacular building technology and its aesthetic followed.

The International Style found widespread acceptance in almost all of India, but Madras, and to some extent all of South India, seems to have been untouched by the rhetoric of Internationalism and global architecture. The buildings built during this time, designed by the Madras based firm of S. L. Chitale & Son, were the Senate House, 1950, Trivandrum; Reserve bank of India, Nagpur, 1950s and Tamil Isai Sangam, Madras, 1950s, and are a good examples of the persistence of the traditional forms and stylistic motifs in the 1950s.

The paradigmatic building of this time was the Vidhan Soudha (Fig. 55) or the Legislative Assembly building in Bangalore, begun in 1952, for the state of Mysore (present day Karnataka state), and conceived by the then Chief Minister, Hanumanthaiah, who sought to manifest the power and dignity of the people, which was traditionally represented in the royal palace.

> "Sovereignty has been shifted from the palace to the legislature and it is therefore imperative that the building should depict this transfer of power and reflect the power and dignity of the people and that should be the main characteristic of the building."[84]

The building was a carefully conceived blend of regional and Rajasthani architecture, aiming to create an indigenous architecture. It is a stone structure with square and polygonal pillars with richly carved base and capital, deep friezes, curved cornices, 'chaitya' arches, domical finials, pillared halls and the dome supported on dwarf columns, which are perceived as distinctly 'Dravidian' in character (Figs. 56a & b). The floral motifs and other stone carving is drawn from the rich temple craft of southern India.

The project was completed in 1956 and was executed by a team of engineers and architects led by B. R. Manickam, Chief Engineer with the state Public Works Department.

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[84] Mr. Hanumanthaiah, Chief Minister, Karnataka state, 1951-6 in The City Beautiful: A Celebration of the Architectural Heritage and City Aesthetics of Bangalore by T. P. Issar (Bangalore: The Heritage of Urban Arts Commission ,1988) p. 44.

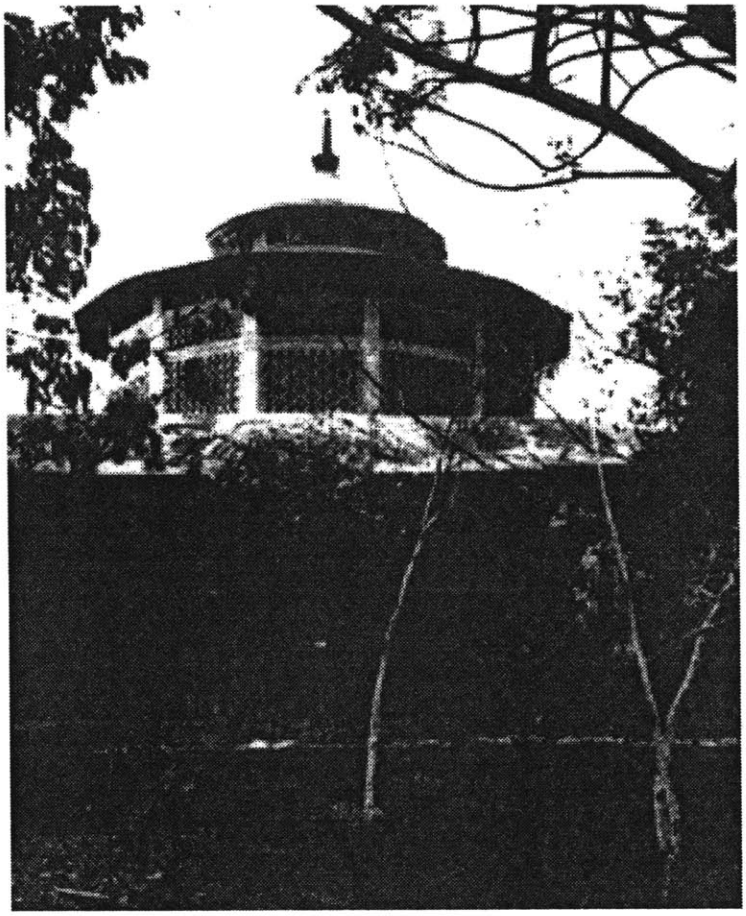

Fig. 57 The Library, Center for Development Studies, Trivandrum, 1975, offers a vocabulary for the use of low-cost materials, techniques and innovative design forms.

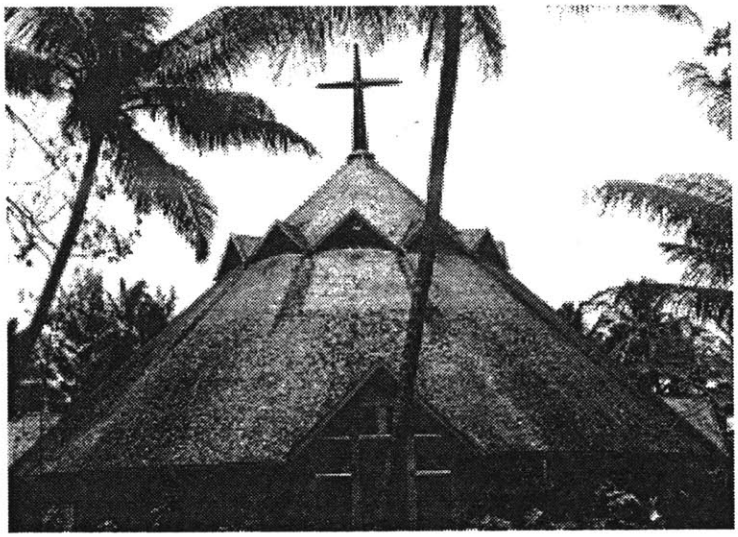

Fig. 58 The St. John Cathedral, Tiruvalla, 1973, is a fine example of Baker's arts and crafts training and is a collaborative effort of the architect and local artisans. It employs local forms and building techniques.

5000 laborers, including 1500 craftsmen, masons and wood carvers were employed on the project. This building was an attempt to define 'Dravidian' architecture for a people who sought to express their identity as separate from that of Aryan North India.

This preference for local and regional vernacular forms was not devoid of a political agenda. Much like the political agenda behind the 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture in the last quarter of the 19th century, the choice or selection of architectural forms for the buildings of the last quarter of the 20th century was a conscious decision on part of the ruling party to legitimate their power. While there are obvious similarities in the mechanisms employed by the British and the state government of Tamil Nadu, what interests me is in what aspects are these buildings a product of their context.

This period is also epitomized by the works of Laurie Baker, a British architect settled in India, and projects like the Kalakshetra Cultural Center (cf. Fig. 5), Madras, 1978-84, which sought to return to the traditional forms by reinterpreting them. Baker, committed to the service of society in the Gandhian spirit has made a very personal architecture of high quality. Using visually distinctive forms and techniques, he has devised methods for reducing construction costs. His sensitivity for the craft of building suggest a bias towards the 'Arts and Crafts' ethics of 1930s British architectural training. His architecture shows a strong affinity with the hybrid style of the late 19th century architects like Robert F. Chisholm and draws inspiration from local and regional precedents (Figs. 57 & 58).

Despite being India's fourth metropolis, Madras, and most of South India, has not been in the architectural mainstream, especially in comparison with the numerous western 'masters' that North India has been, directly or indirectly, influenced by. This has perpetuated the image of the South as a traditional and retiring society. But, some architects feel that it is precisely due to the lack of the influence of the western 'masters' that the South is unencumbered and free to choose its own directions and to create its own vocabulary rooted in the context.

Search and Representation of 'Tamil' Identity

This was an effort to create a 'Tamil' identity through the use of regional vernacular and Hindu classical architecture. Architects and designers were looking for a culturally and environmentally appropriate architecture, to make the best use of available resources, building materials, skills, construction and techniques, to respond to and reflect local traditions of composition, motifs and decorative arts, and to regard the demands of the client and user. The task is to create something of significance while relying on and responding to local building practices and traditions for the imagery and theme. A synthesis of concern for new materials and techniques and traditional knowledge is producing a language, a vocabulary that reflects the modernity of the pluralistic Indian society.

Concerned about the influence of the West and believing that indigenous traditions could be a good source for imagery. Menon argues that,

> "There's a parallel movement of the vernacular in our country in opposition to the anonymity of the International Style, but most of the Post-Modern buildings in India basically consist of plastered-on features on a modern building. I feel that we can find our roots by discovering more need-based genuine precursors of form. Take our context— we're poor, we need something that is not capital intensive, has low technology and is labor intensive. Now, if we start meeting that need I can assure you we will be very regional and very vernacular. Creativity implies diversity in every aspect. I'm quite sure that we can successfully go Post-Modern within our particular context."[85]

On the search for identity in the post-modern world, Raghavendran says,

> "The reaction to the International Style which has resulted in Post-Modernism has not really affected our work except in the case of a receptive client who has had this kind of exposure to what is happening elsewhere. We did make one or two attempts at introducing an element of Post-Modernism, but I don't think this has been a general tendency in our work. On the other hand, there have been cases where one has had to draw upon existing or traditional exterior treatment and moldings, as for instance, in the Pondicherry University where the strong influences of the French tradition and culture had to be incorporated. The buildings had to be reflective of the earlier established building exteriors. Working for very different clients has led to a varied approach,..."[86]

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[85] A. G. Krishna Menon, interview with S. Shankar, "The Old..." Architecture+Design (1988) p. 21.

[86] C. N. Raghavendran, interview with S. Shankar, "The Old..." Architecture+Design (1988) p. 43.

Two aspects of their design methodology are evident from this quote, one that style or architectural language is a responsive to the needs and requirements of the client and the other aspect of response to context through "exterior treatment and moldings." This position is not very different from Chisholm's whose use of the facade as an element to express identity, is primarily concerned with exterior appearance. What is also remarkable is that both Chisholm and Raghavendran use the same mechanisms to achieve the effect— traditional craftsmen or *mistri*— in the case of Chisholm traditional craftsmen trained in the Arts and Crafts College, established in 1855 while in the case of Raghavendran craftsmen trained in the Government College of Sculpture and Architecture, established in the 1952, to revive traditional arts and crafts technologies. In the case of Kalakshetra, the consulting of a sthapati, or a craftsman well read in the ancient scriptures and treatises, in the design of the building, is also trying to restore the traditional craftsman to a former glorious position by outlining their present day relevance in a world dominated by modern technology. Here is probably an attempt to redefine the role of the craftsman and to positively apply the knowledge and skills of a traditional mechanism to modern use.

This project was sponsored by the state government and their reference to the regional, vernacular, indigenous architecture, reflects the desire of the government to portray themselves in the role of patron of the arts, as a way of raising their status in the urban environment and legitimizing their authority, exerting control over societal values and institutions. The state government of Tamil Nadu, saw themselves as the new rulers and in order to legitimate their power used architecture as a tool towards this end. In consonance with this role, the new institutions such as the auditoriums and cultural centers used the language of regional vernacular and Hindu classical architecture. Their sponsorship of this project and many others is a conscious move towards the construction of a 'Tamil' identity.

While both Thiruvalluvar Kottam Cultural Center & Kalakshetra Cultural Center are attempts to link to a pre-colonial past, Thiruvalluvar Kottam employs the high tradition of Hindu temple architecture while the Kalakshetra uses vernacular architecture as its source of imagery. Both the high tradition of the south Indian classical Hindu temples and the low tradition of vernacular architecture are seen as an expression of Tamil identity. This is a search to find the physical form that will reflect the Indianness of the region and the symbolic images that are being projected by the government of the state of Tamil Nadu reflects attempts to link public buildings with indigenous Tamil traditions of architecture.

The use of high and low traditions of architecture are consistent with the political attitude of the sponsoring governments. The high and the low traditions were considered appropriate by governments which were attempting to put forward an idea of a regional Tamil identity— not territorially bounded but linked by common heritage and culture. The difference is that while the proponents of the high tradition were looking to bridge the gap between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins to increase their political following, the proponents of vernacular architecture, were attempting to unite all the poor and socially under privileged peoples. This indigenising process symbolically links religion, culture and politics in a way that is unique to South India.

Concluding Remarks

Colonial & Post-Colonial Narratives

The making of modern India in the 1950s, and the employment of modern architecture and international styles to represent this move towards progress and modernism, is preceded by a 'proto-nationalism,' as represented by the attempt to generate a regional Indian architecture, begun by British architects in the last quarter of the 19th century. The modern movement and international style aimed at the generation of a global, universal expression and was perceived as inappropriate for representation of a regional character. Thus, in India, the need for representation as distinct groups within a culturally diverse nation, generated, in the 1970s a pluralistic attitude towards architecture, rooted in the regionalist sentiments and representing a 'post-nationalism' expression of identity. Le Corbusier and Chandigarh came between these stages of proto- and post- nation-state affiliations.

The Tamil movement for recognition and representation as a distinct group within the diverse Indian population in the post-colonial era, unlike the separatist movements in

Punjab and Kashmir, was an attempt to define a separate cultural identity, within the larger national context.[87] The nationalist independence movements of the post-colonial struggle, asserted that a backward nation could 'modernize' itself while retaining its cultural identity. Hence, unlike the eastern European nations (which were culturally not different from their trend setting leaders like England and France), there was neither an absolute acceptance of the universal standards of another culture, which had to be imitated and surpassed, nor were the inherited traditions, which identified the colonized, completely rejected. In fact, the 1970s and 80s saw the development of an effort to combine the cultural aspects with contemporary modern technological developments.

In the case of the Indian nation which is a linguistic collectivity with a territorial base and is, primarily, a cultural phenomenon, the claim to homeland or geographical location is not necessarily a legitimation due to origin as nations can claim territories. In contrast to the above mentioned identity, which is a cultural entity, the notion of state is a political entity. The idea of a state[88] is a comparatively modern phenomenon, with the citizenship, i.e., membership of a state with certain political rights, as a common feature. Despite its inherently liberal nature, the basis of drawing boundaries of these states were suspect and the foundation of these national entities included a mythologizing, a legitimizing of their moral claim over a territory by homogenizing tropes and inevitably reflected a hegemonic apparatus.

The modern imaginaire of a homeland seems to have finally subsumed the Hindus. If Muslims can have Pakistan, Jews can have Israel, why cannot India be the land of the Hindus? Secularists reject this idea because in this Hinduised definition of Indianization, minority groups are either symbolically excluded or culturally subordinated. This crisis, to some extent, is the crisis of modernity: the age of nationalism has privileged territorial boundaries over meaningful interrelationships. But how could one fit these ideas of nation and nationalism, in a political formation that makes a subcontinental (territorial) zone made

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[87] The process of representing cultural identity, inherently excluded certain groups and identities. Thus, the cultural zone defined as a single homogenous entity, is in fact very diverse within itself, and not as homogenous or singular as is projected by the politicians.

[88] The concept of a state originated in Europe in 18th and 19th century with the notion of one-nation, one-state breaking with the earlier monarchic systems, by the emancipatory struggles of the newly empowered bourgeoisie. Refer E. J. Hobsbawm The Age of Revolution 1789-1848, The Age of Capital 1848-1875 and The Age of Empire 1875-1914.

up of distinct regions, combined with a cultural formation that despite its diversity does not yield to imaginary boundaries?

The post-nationalist phase has seen the demise of citizenship based nation-states as the relevant unit and nationalism in South India, rather than a direct response to colonial rule, has been a response to the dominance of the Brahmin and non-Brahmin elites in the pre-independence British and the post-Independence governments. To overcome the feeling of inferiority and a sense of exploitation at the hands of the North Indian Aryans and the local Brahmin and non-Brahmin elites, the 'cultural nationalism movement' expressed the superiority of the Dravidian culture to counter this dominance. The Dravidian culture was defined as everything that Aryan culture was not, denoting the Aryan culture as the 'other.' The pre-Aryan, ancient roots of the Dravidian culture were stressed by emphasizing a golden age. In an attempt to define the Dravidian culture as distinct from Aryan culture the role of the DMK Party has been crucial. The mechanisms used by the party for constructing a distinct Dravidian identity and legitimizing claim for recognition and representation were, a myth of origins in space and time, a myth of ancestry, migration and liberation, a myth of the golden age, decline and rebirth. The aim was to express their distinctness with respect to the Aryan civilization. This is best explained through the issue of language which has been the subject of deep contention. Salman Rushdie points out that, English is a language that unites all of India,

> "There is also an interesting North-South divide in Indian attitudes to English. In the North, in the so-called 'Hindi belt', where the capital, Delhi, is located, it is possible to think of Hindi as a future national language; but in South India, which is at present suffering from the attempts of central government to *impose* this national language on it, the resentment of Hindi is far greater than English. After spending quite some time in South India, I've become convinced that English is an essential language in India, not only because of its technical vocabularies and the international communications which it makes possible, but also simply to permit two Indians to talk to each other in a tongue which neither party hates."[89]

What is this 'distinctiveness'? Why are the differences more significant than the similarities? How does it contribute to a sense of 'us'? How do ideas of state and nation contribute to the construction of identity? Identity, according to Crawford Young, is a

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89 S. Rushdie, "'Commonwealth Literature' Does Not Exist" in Imaginary Homelands: Essays & Criticism 1981-1991 (New York: Granta Books & Viking, 1991) p. 64-5.

"subjective self-concept or social role" and as such, it is "often variable, overlapping and situational."[90] To make this point, he takes the example of a rural farmer in India, whose identity is composed of many parts— as a cultivator, a tenant, a member of a family, sub-caste or caste; and alternatively as a speaker of a particular language, follower of a religion, belonging to a region or supporter of a political faction. Only at levels further removed from his day to day interactions does the person think of himself/herself as a rural person and finally, as an Indian. In India, supra local identities were not well developed prior to the arrival of the British and their cultivation by post-colonial leaderships is a difficult task.[91] Local and supra local identities are not dichotomous, one is not traditional and the other modern. Rather both are different forms of national identity.

In the making of this national identity, through a search for an indigenous architecture, 'purity' and 'authenticity' are stressed and it demands that precedents, forms and symbols be rooted in a homogeneous and continuous tradition. But this notion of a pure, unalloyed past is misleading as, especially in the case of India, the very nature of Indian culture is its mixed, eclectic tradition.

> "...the very essence of Indian culture is that we possess a mixed tradition, melange of elements as disparate as ancient Mughal and contemporary, Coca-Cola American. to say nothing of Muslim, Buddhist, Jain, Christian, Jewish, British, French, Portuguese, Marxist, Maoist, Trotskyist, Vietnamese, capitalist, and of course Hindu elements. Eclecticism, the ability to take from the world what seems fitting and to leave the rest, has always been a hallmark of the Indian tradition, and today it is at the center of the best work being done in the visual arts and in literature."[92]

My attempt to understand the relationship between culture and politics, by making a trans-historical comparison between the two colonial and the two contemporary buildings, forced me to think about the complexity underlying the need to define ones identity, construct ones identity and concretize it by means of symbols and artifacts. While it became apparent that politics played a major role in the definition and construction of ones identity, its expression by means of symbols and artifacts was not as explicit. While representing a

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[90] C. Young, The Politics of Cultural Pluralism (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976) p. 71.

[91] Mahasweta Devi, Imaginary Maps (New York & London: Routledge, 1995) Gayatri Chakravorty-Spivak (Tr.).

[92] S. Rushdie. "Imaginary Homelands..." p. 67.

overt political agenda, the buildings were ambiguous in their intentions. The architects and designers began with a very clear goal or image but the product or artifact could be interpreted in a number of ways. This multiplicity of meanings made these buildings interesting for this study.

As my analysis indicated, identity is not latent in a particular form or motif, waiting to be revealed, rather same forms and motifs acquire meaning in a particular historical context. In the case of colonial and post-colonial Madras, forms and motifs borrowed from both the high tradition of classical Hindu temple architecture and the low tradition of the local and regional, were employed to represent identity, pointing to the fact that these forms or motifs acquire meaning, and were seen to represent both 'British-Indian' and 'Tamil' identity. In the case of the colonial buildings, 'British-Indian' identity is posited as opposed to the western one while, in the contemporary buildings, the 'Tamil' identity is equated with the Dravidian identity and posited as opposed to the Aryan one. The buildings I have selected represent the first of each of these dual identities.

The 'Indo-Saracenic' was essentially an assemblage into a new language, of elements borrowed from various traditions, eastern and western. Eclecticism was not peculiar to 19th century India but was the mode of time in Europe. The debate over the choice of architectural style for the British empire in India coincided with the 'Battle of Styles' and the choice between classical and gothic, in Britain. And the buildings designed by Chisholm in Madras point to the fact that the developments in India happen simultaneously with those in Britain and are influenced by it.

The 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture was perceived as an appropriate expression of 'British-Indian' identity. The employment of regional forms and stylistic motifs were not considered detrimental to this image until the last decade of the 19th century when due to increasing nationalism, the British sought to create an universal expression for all of India, to legitimate their empire as the successor to the Mughal one. Thus, a change in conception of their role and identity in India, also effected its manifestation and from this point on, the 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture acquired a universal image, with the forms borrowed primarily from the Indo-Islamic tradition of the Mughal empire.

The effort to study traditional architecture of the colonized society was not formalized until the establishment of institutions like the Archeological Survey of India in the 1860s. The ASI made extensive surveys and measured drawings of ancient monuments. But no attempt was made to relate these studies to the translated texts which explained the design principles of Indian architecture. The study of vernacular traditions was not begun until the 1940s, when Claude Batley, the head of the J. J. School of Art in Bombay, pointed to the merits of this indigenous tradition. Thus, the selection of forms for the generation of 'Indo-Saracenic' architecture was random and arbitrary and, did not attempt to critically analyze the conventions of regional classical or vernacular architecture. The form created was intentionalist, expressing the political ambitions of the British and external factors such as the use of traditional materials and techniques and the role of the traditional craftsmen, primarily in the construction of the facade.

The issue that concerned me most, while analyzing these buildings which had obvious political agendas, was that their architecture, choice of style, forms and motifs were subject to many unascertainable and ambiguous factors like, the choice of a particular local or regional culture, choice and availability of materials, forms, and techniques, traditional craftsmen and skills versus the modern technology, and to some extent, the background and personal choice of the architects and designers. Out of these constraints was created an architecture between culture and form, one that was not solely concerned with autonomous form or was merely an instrument of culture.

The colonial buildings in Madras represented the Western rationality, science and technology, brought to the 'natives' by the British for the progress and development of the local people. The post-colonial cultural centers in Madras represented the regional culture which, along with western technology, was seen as the means towards development and progress. Despite their different attitudes, both sets of buildings stood for the identity of a people, one as perceived by the British and the other as perceived by the elites who sought to represent the local people. The two aspects common to both the colonial and post-colonial contexts are, a concern for the degraded status of the skilled craftsmen which led to remedial measures (and the establishment of arts and crafts schools to counter the forces leading to their degradation) and the treatment of the facade with regional forms and motifs (while the structure is of contemporary modern materials). This attention to the local and regional is an antithesis of the heroic modernism of Le Corbusier and Chandigarh.

The facade or the exterior of buildings has been a tool for expressing the identity of a people. Both the colonial and contemporary buildings have structures built of modern materials of their time while the facade of the building itself makes references to the regional architecture, classical and vernacular, and has both western and eastern precedents. While the stylistic elements and motifs for the Post and Telegraph Office are borrowed from the local and regional traditions of Tamil Nadu (Madras State in British time), Kerala (Travancore State in British time) and Karnataka (Mysore state in British time), the design elements in the Law Court employ the imagery of the Indo-Islamic, primarily from the Mughal architecture of Fatehpur Sikri, Delhi and Agra.

The exterior makes overt references to the regional architecture, high and low traditions, the structure of the buildings is in contemporary materials like cast-iron and steel. The main hall of the Post and Telegraph Office has cast-iron columns supporting trusses with glass windows. This structure of the building is constructed out of the latest materials and construction techniques of its time, but it is covered with forms and motifs drawn from regional sources, with traditional craftsmen employed in the construction of the buildings. The Law Court is a masonry construction and its exterior is an eclectic mixture of forms borrowed from various traditions, eastern and western. Both buildings, built fifteen years apart, and employing forms from local, regional, Indo-Islamic and western traditions, were seen to represent 'British-Indian' identity.

The firm of C. R. Narayanarao, in the design of Kalakshetra Cultural Center, borrowed stylistic elements and motifs from the regional traditions of palaces, and other secular and religious buildings. And the Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center uses forms and motifs from the classical Hindu temple architectural tradition. Again both these cultural centers are representative of 'Tamil' identity. These buildings, too, use contemporary materials and technology for the structure while the exterior borrows forms and makes references to the classical and regional traditions. The Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center is built out of reinforced concrete, except the base of the chariot or 'ratha,' which is exquisitely carved and sculpted in stone. Even the roof of the 'ratha' is a reinforced concrete shell. All the forms borrowed from the Hindu classical temple, stone architecture tradition are imitated in reinforced concrete. The surface decoration is also imitated in plaster of Paris and painted with bright colors. The Kalakshetra Cultural Center has a structure of columns in reinforced concrete, which supports the steel trusses of the roof.

The roof is covered with traditional materials like timber rafters and clay tiles. The walls of the buildings consists of slatted wooden windows, resembling the vernacular palaces, houses, temples and mosques, of the region.

In both cases, the colonial and the contemporary, the status of the skilled craftsman in the building industry is the issue that prompts a debate or calls for experimentation, to find new directions. Surprisingly, both use similar mechanisms to revive the traditional arts and crafts— establishment of schools of arts & crafts or training institutes. The University Senate House and the Post and Telegraph Office were built by local craftsmen trained in the Government College of Arts and Crafts, Madras, established in 1855. The traditional forms and motifs constructed in timber are imitated in materials like stone and brick. The Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center was constructed by traditional craftsmen from the Government School of Arts and Crafts, Mahabalipuram, established in 1952. They reproduce the forms of the traditional wooden architecture in stone and reinforced concrete. In a sense, this is no different from what the craftsmen employed on the buildings designed by Chisholm were doing. The 19th century craftsmen decorated the surfaces once the building had been completely designed.

A little different is the attitude of the firm of C. R. Narayanarao and Sons. The firm pioneered the employment of engineers and designers trained in both the Eastern and Western traditions in the design of their projects. And in the case of the Kalakshetra Cultural Center, a traditional craftsman, knowledgeable in the Hindu scriptures and texts on the art of building, is a consultant in the design development, not merely a "decorator of surfaces" like was the case of colonial buildings designed by Chisholm and his contemporaries.

Chisholm, while being a part of the colonial mentality that shaped the architectural taste of the time, was a variant, an individual performing within the constraints of the colonial framework as is obvious from the use of local and regional, Hindu and Indo-Islamic elements in his design. While following the mandate of the British Government whose representative, Lord Napier, Governor of Madras, declared the Hindu architecture, with its profuse sculptural ornamentation, inappropriate for use by the British government, Chisholm assembled a range of elements from various sources, including Hindu classical temple building and regional traditions, in the design of his 'Indo-Saracenic' structures.

Irwin's Law Court was a direct reference to the Indo-Islamic tradition and was primarily a representation of the political aspirations of the British at the turn of the 19th century. But he too is aware of the role of the craftsmen, traditional skills and techniques and materials, in the construction of the Law Court. Similarly the post-colonial architects, while responding to the political mandate of the governments, strive to create an architecture representative of a concern for regional culture and form. While the architects and designers of the Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center make overt references to the Hindu architectural tradition, the architects and designers of the Kalakshetra Cultural Center draw from the vernacular tradition, thus not prioritizing any religious groups.

In the case of the Valluvar Kottam which borrows primarily from the high tradition of regional classical Hindu temple architecture, the forms are imitated and directly applied. The employment of a 'sthapati' or a person well read in the canonical texts, does not generate a form that is responsive to the function, materials and construction techniques. Rather, the effort remains imitative and reflects the post-modern attitude of pastiche and use of history to interpret the past. The Kalakshetra Cultural Center, borrowing primarily from the low tradition of local and regional wooden construction, is successful in arriving at a use or function based form, combining the inherited traditions and modern technology. A thorough understanding of the conventions and the employment of a civil engineer also trained as a 'sthapati,' provides a context for the interpretation and analysis of the forms. This reflects a reciprocity between culture and other social conditions, which is the result of a society's contact with other societies, development over time and disciplines of internal criticism and analysis, which influence the interpretation and design of artifacts.

Arbitrary selection of forms and motifs from various traditions (Indian and western) and historical periods and its assemblage into a new language, characterized the colonial buildings. While reflecting the eclectic attitude of its time, the forms and stylistic motifs are carefully, but arbitrarily selected and used for a specific political purpose or goal. The lack of a critical study or understanding of the traditions and conventions of the colonized society, led to interpretations which were intentionalist.

The contemporary buildings attempted a critical understanding of the traditions and conventions from which the forms were borrowed. This was an effort at post-modernism, to represent ones identity and, reinterpret history and the past. The designers of the

Valluvar Kottam Cultural Center, 1976-8, were only concerned with the overall impact of the building form and the Hindu temple architecture conventions were employed without any critical assessment of the function of the building. The Kalakshetra Cultural Center, 1980-2, made an attempt to analyze the tradition from which the forms were borrowed. By employing a person well trained in both conventions, Indian ('Vastu-Shastra') and the western (modern day civil engineering), in the design process to arrive at a use-based form, combining the aspects of inherited traditions and modern technology. The autonomy of the architectural object is due to a preoccupation with cultural meaning of forms rather than social aspects of architecture.

While it becomes apparent that the mechanisms employed by the architects and designers of the colonial and contemporary buildings to define identity are similar, the contemporary buildings indicate new directions that architecture could take, drawing from both the traditional precedents and the modern technological developments. The Kalakshetra Cultural Center illustrates how the design process and the product could be enriched by integrating the traditional and the new technological developments. While most other architects and the designers in the country are involved in ahistorical selection of forms and motifs, here is an attempt to contextualize the building in a place and time to create a regional architecture.

With the opening of the Indian economy, the Indian architects and designers (in India and abroad) are faced with competition, and to maintain their position, the construction of a historical narrative of ancient Indian traditions, myths and symbols serves the purpose. The traditional polarities of 'scientific and rational West' and 'transcendental East' is perpetuated through such narratives. The commodification of an ancient heritage into consumable entities, and the reference to the mythic patrimony with its concomitant themes of timelessness and ancient wisdom, serves to legitimate specific architectural agendas.[93]

In the March/April 1996 issue of the "Yoga Journal," a bimonthly magazine published by the California Yoga Teachers Association, an article entitled "Dwellings of the Humans and Gods," contributes to the making of the myth of the magic diagrams and

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93 Ritu Bhatt & Sonit Bafna, "Vistara— Post-Colonial Narratives of Indian Architecture" in Architecture + Design (1995) p. 35-41.

provides some "rules of thumb" for a "Do-It-Yourself Vastu Shastra,"[94] perpetuating the making of stereotypes and myths. The author, Parveen Chopra suggests that scientifically validated or not, "riding the Vastu wave" is the future of architecture in India and abroad, as it promises a "convivial lifetime, while modern architecture confines itself to function, comfort, and aesthetics."[95] The implication that "Vastu Shastra" would help transcend the functional and practical aspects of architecture and lead to a higher level of life, sustains the myths of the East-West polarity.

All cultural production is a consequence of its context and may be understood only with respect to it. And the buildings of the 1970s and 80s in Madras, when seen in the context of India and the works of architects like Uttam C. Jain and Charles Correa, are responsible for constructing a historical narrative that legitimizes specific architectural agendas in India. While the use of traditional precedents along with modern technology could indicate a new direction in Indian architecture, the appropriation of past styles and history, to 'create a tradition' as Eric Hobsbawm has discussed in "The Invention of Tradition" (Cambridge & New York, 1992) or as a program for the future, advances the perpetuation of stereotypes and myths. The rhetoric of symbols, magic diagrams and myths as criteria for evaluating buildings is an illustration of such 'invented traditions.' The confluence of a search for Indianness and the post-modern thought in architecture is a paradoxical aspect of the recognition of the autonomy of architecture. This awareness of the 'cultural' has replaced the earlier emphasis of the 1960s on the 'social' role of architecture. The preoccupation with visual and symbolic aspects of architectural form and its cultural meaning has led to an increased autonomy of the architectural object.

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[94] Parveen Chopra, "Dwellings of the Humans and Gods" in Yoga Journal (Berkeley: California Yoga Teachers Association, Mar-Apr 1996), p. 86-7.

[95] P. Chopra, "Dwellings of the..." p. 89.

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Fig. 1 Map of India.
Source: Architecture in India p. 179.

Fig. 3 Law Court, Madras.
Source: Metcalf, T. An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj p. 83.

Fig. 6 'Rathas' or chariots at Mahabalipuram.
Source: Tadgell, C. The History of Architecture in India: From the dawn of Civilization to the End of the Raj p. 74.

Fig. 7 Entrance Gate, Taj Mahal, Agra.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, 43577

Fig. 8 Vadakkunnatha Temple, Trichur.
Source: Marg (vXLIII #3 1991-2) p. 19.

Fig. 9 Government House & Banquet Hall, Madras.
Source: Tadgell, C. The History of Architecture in India: From the dawn of Civilization to the End of the Raj p. 282.

Fig. 10 Painting by Majorie Shoosmith.
Source: Irving, R. Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker and Imperial Delhi fig. 1.

Fig. 11 Map of Madras.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, 78467

Fig. 12 Kapaliswarar Temple, Mylapore, Madras.
Source: Muthiah, S. Madras: The Gracious City p. 54.

Fig. 13 'Ratha' Festival.
Source: Marg (vXLIII #2 1991-2) p. 31.

Fig. 14b St. George's Chapel, Regent Street, London.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, Lantern Slide.

Fig. 16b Taj Mahal, Agra.
Source: Tadgell, C. The History of Architecture in India: From the dawn of Civilization to the End of the Raj pl. 44.

Fig. 17c Kailasanath Temple, Ellora.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, A11036.

Fig. 17d Halebid Temple, Belur.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, A17359.

Fig. 17e Akbar's Tomb, Sikandra, Agra.
Source: Tadgell, C. The History of Architecture in India: From the dawn of Civilization to the End of the Raj pl. 37.

Fig. 18c Padmanabhapuram Palace, Trivandrum.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, 7380.

Fig. 20 Law Court, Madras.
Source: Tadgell, C. The History of Architecture in India: From the dawn of Civilization to the End of the Raj p. 292.

Fig. 21b Plan, Taj Mahal, Agra.
Source: Volwahsen, A. Living Architecture: Indian p. 98.

Fig. 25b Taj Mahal, Agra.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, K13645.

Fig. 26c Taj Mahal, Agra.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, A 38797.

Fig. 27c University Library, Bombay.
Source: Tadgell, C. The History of Architecture in India: From the dawn of Civilization to the End of the Raj p. 288.

Fig. 28 Presidency College, Madras.
Source: Muthiah, S. Madras :The Gracious City p. 39.

Fig. 29 Government College of Arts & Crafts, Madras.
Source: Muthiah, S. Madras: The Gracious City p. 152.

Fig. 30 The Board of Revenue Offices, Madras.
Source: Metcalf, T. An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj p. 61.

Fig. 31 Tirumalai Nayak's Palace, Madurai.
Source: Michell, G. The Royal Palaces of India p. 189.

Fig. 34b Buland Darwaza, Fatehpur Sikri.
Source: Petruccioli, A. Fatehpur Sikri p.54.

Fig. 36 Egmore Railway Station, Madras.
Source: Muthiah, S. Madras: The Gracious City p. 194.

Fig. 37 Secretariat, New Delhi.
Source: Evenson, N. The Indian Metropolis: A View Toward the West p. 109.

Fig. 39b Plan, Virupaksha Temple, Pattadakal.
Source: Tadgell, C. The History of Architecture in India: From the dawn of Civilization to the End of the Raj p. 86.

Fig. 40b Airavateshvara Temple, Darasuram.
Source: Tadgell, C. The History of Architecture in India: From the dawn of Civilization to the End of the Raj p. 99.

Fig. 41b 'Ratha' at Mahabalipuram.
Source: Tadgell, C. The History of Architecture in India: From the dawn of Civilization to the End of the Raj p. 74.

Fig. 42b Varadarajaswami Temple, Kanchipuram.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, A9192.

Fig. 43b Ratha, Kapaliswarar Temple, Mylapore, Madras.
Source: Marg (vXLIII #2 1991-2) p. 31.

Fig. 43c Papanatha Temple, Pattadakal.
Source: Tadgell, C. The History of Architecture in India: From the dawn of Civilization to the End of the Raj p. 84.

Fig. 43e Varadarajaswami Temple, Kanchipuram.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, 49481.

Fig. 43g Surya Temple, Konark.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, A11047.

Fig. 43i Minakshi Temple, Madurai.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, 59621.

Fig. 45 Plan, Kalakshetra Cultural Center, Madras.
Source: Architecture+Design (Jul-Aug 1988) p. 46.

Fig. 46 Section, Kalakshetra Cultural Center, Madras.
Source: Architecture+ Design (Jul-Aug 1988) p. 46.

Fig. 47b Audience Hall, Padmanabhapuram Palace, Trivandrum.
Source: Michell, G. The Royal Palaces of India p. 182.

Fig. 49b Padmanabhapuram Palace, Trivandrum.
Source: Vistara: The Architecture of India p. 81.

Fig. 50b Vadakkunnatha Temple, Trichur.
Source: Marg (vXLIII #3 1991-2) p. 19.

Fig. 51 The Capitol Complex, Chandigarh.
Source: Vistara: The Architecture of India? p. 51.

Fig. 52 Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.
Source: Rotch Visual Collection, 88377.

Fig. 53 Tagore Hall, Chandigarh.
Source: Architecture in India p. 78.

Fig. 54 Sri Ram Center, New Delhi.
Source: Vistara: The Architecture of India p. 123.

Fig. 55 Vidhan Soudha, Bangalore.
Source: Issar, T. P. The City Beautiful: A Celebration of the Architectural Heritage and City Aesthetics of Bangalore p.34.

Fig. 56a Vidhan Soudha, Bangalore.
Source: Issar, T. P. The City Beautiful: A Celebration of the Architectural Heritage and City Aesthetics of Bangalore p.40.

Fig. 56b Vidhan Soudha, Bangalore.
Source: Issar, T. P. The City Beautiful: A Celebration of the Architectural Heritage and City Aesthetics of Bangalore p.46.

Fig. 57 Library, Center for Development Studies, Trivandrum.
Source: Bhatt, V. & Scriver, P. Contemporary Indian Architecture After the Masters p. 128.

Fig. 58 St. John Cathedral, Tiruvalla.
Source: Bhatt, V. & Scriver, P. Contemporary Indian Architecture After the Masters p. 132.

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